Every child has a voice.
We believe that no child should be left unheard.
childhelplineinternational.org
EMPOWERING TO PROTECT

Child Helpline International’s 2016 – 2020 Strategy has been developed to build on our determination to give a voice to children and young people worldwide and through this to empower them to shape the world and realise their rights.

Central to this strategy is a commitment to make the world a safer place for children by helping to protect them from violence and by ensuring their voices are used to influence policy, legislation and practice.

Grounded in children’s rights principles and working in partnership with our members, the major goals of the strategy are to: strengthen our member helplines capacity to protect children, utilise the unique data set generated by these members to influence and strengthen child protection systems worldwide.

Through this strategy, Child Helpline International will redefine its position as a leader in child protection system improvement and as an advocate for the rights of children.
FOREWORD

Child Helpline International’s Strategy 2016-2020 is rooted in the values and mission that we share with all of our child helpline members. We believe that no child’s voice should be left unheard. They should be able to express themselves and even more importantly, to be listened to with empathy. Child helplines play a crucial role in protecting children. They actively listen to and help children and young people. They prevent violence and other forms of harm against children. Ultimately, they empower children to help themselves. Child helplines are critical to child protection systems. The foundation of our strategy is our shared values on children’s rights, the impact on child protection and safety, and supporting children and young people.

As a collective of like-minded organisations, we share a common agenda. Through technology, we want to change global policies, practices and processes, to allow children to be heard. Through their voice, every child will help shape the world and realise their rights.

Child Helpline International has partners, donors and funders who share our philosophical underpinnings and strategy. The developing strategy began in 2012, in Durban, South Africa, with an International Consultation. In 2013, we continued through five regional consultations. An independent evaluation of the 2011-2015 strategy execution assessed existing framework and activities. Finally, the General Assembly of Child Helplines in 2014 approved a document outlining the strategic direction of the next five year period.

We are proud to present this Child Helpline International Strategy 2016-2020 final document. Our Supervisory Board is committed to the changes needed to produce a robust response to the challenges and opportunities we will face in the future.

“Safety and security don’t just happen, they are the result of collective consensus and public investment. We owe our children, the most vulnerable citizens in our society, a life free of violence and fear.”

Nelson Mandela
Child Helpline International - Giving a voice to children and young people worldwide

We are one of the world’s largest collective impact organisations and have a network of 181 members. We actively listen to and help children and young people across 147 countries. We have coordinated a movement to help improve children’s lives and influence policy. Together, the team facilitates a knowledge transfer and communication amongst our global and regional organisations.

Since 2003, Child Helpline International has advocated for the rights of children and young people around the world; a community of 2.5 billion. Child helplines are crucial players in system transformation. Whether in countries with strong, sophisticated child protection systems or those with weaker or yet to be put in place systems.

Child helplines give children and young people a voice.

We support the creation and strengthening of child helplines and ensure their recognition as an essential part of child protection systems. Over the last 12 years, we collected data that shows violence against children is the most frequent and consistent reason for children and young people contacting helplines around the world. We listen to children so we can identify the most pressing issues in their lives.

Child helplines provide direct access to invaluable insights on children’s lives. All across the world, each child and young person contacts child helplines to express their fears, worries, thoughts and concerns. Child helplines are easy to access, safe, secure, trustworthy and free of charge.

Our vision

A world where technology allows children to be heard, one by one. Through their voices we can shape the world and realise their rights.

Our value add

Child Helpline International is a collective impact organisation. We coordinate information, viewpoints, knowledge and data from our child helpline members, partners and external sources. This exceptional resource can aid profound change in child protection systems globally, regionally and nationally. In every country where Child Helpline International has a member (and even where not yet), children are the ultimate beneficiaries.
Our network model is unique. We advocate, influence and change attitudes; transforming policies and practices on a global and regional level. We are an international collaboration that brings together an extraordinarily diverse group of child helplines from around the world to advance a common agenda. We provide a unique service to child helpline members that is not found elsewhere.
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We believe that no child should be left unheard.  
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Our team collects, compiles and analyses information from our child helpline members, and uses this data and results to advocate for children worldwide. This information comes directly from children, representing their voices and giving them an opportunity to be heard. Again, there is no other collective that adds such evidence-based value to its child helpline members, partners and donors.

Child Helpline International builds capacity and knowledge that is used by its child helpline members to improve their operations, data collection, and other vital components of a good quality service. We are a best practice collector, compiler, analyser and disseminator, and are welcomed as a knowledge identifier and transferor.

We committed to developing the capacity and transfer of knowledge amongst network child helpline members. Especially around data collection and analysis. We can use this wealth of information about children and their lives to influence national policy and encourage systemic change for children in their national environments.

Child Helpline International is the coordinator, the backbone organisation and partner facilitator for its child helpline members and partners. The collaboration that we nurture cannot be achieved by individual child helpline members acting alone. Our collective network
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is THE essential element in achieving strong global and regional impact for children around the world.

As such, the Child Helpline International brand is of intrinsic value, but must be further developed to achieve instant recognition as the leading advocate for children’s voices. Child helplines are a crucial part of child protection systems. They are often the child’s first entry point to the system. Their referral to data and statistics, contributes to the strengthening of child protection systems and improving children’s lives.

Child Helpline International’s value proposition is represented visually in the following infographic:

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<th>Collective impact</th>
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Our mission

We respond to children in need of care and protection and actively voice their concerns to policy and decision-makers.

Our guiding principles

Child Helpline International is committed to children’s rights as enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). This is with particular reference to Articles 12 and 19.
ARTICLE 12 (Respect for the views of the child):
Every child has the right to say what they think in all matters affecting them, and to have their views taken seriously.

ARTICLE 19 (Protection from all forms of violence):
Governments must do all they can to ensure that children are protected from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and bad treatment by their parents or anyone else who looks after them.

The Key Principles guiding our work are:
- Child and Youth Participation including in Child Helpline International’s own governance structure.
- Child Helpline International is committed to gender equality.
- When we give children and young people the proper tools – they are the best placed to make decisions about their own lives.
- Child helpline data is an evidence base for child-friendly programming and policy making.
- Communication between children and child helplines should be free of cost.
- Child Helpline International will always be a network of child helplines. We are a bottom-up organisation with a child helpline membership representative governance structure. We ensure that the child helpline membership’s interest comes first.
- Our operating model is a network. It is not a donor organisation and does not provide funds to its child helpline members.
- Child Helpline International raises funds to implement its strategic objectives. We advocate for the recognition of child helplines as a crucial element of child protection systems.

Looking back

Child Helpline International has existed for 12 years. We are both an organisation set up as a non-profit foundation in the Netherlands and an international network of child helpline members in almost 150 countries. As a legal entity, Child Helpline International is a Dutch organisation.

In the first and formative years of the network, it was extremely important to create and consolidate a child helpline membership base. Our emphasis was setting up child helplines and creating a network. Our efforts were very successful and our child helpline membership base doubled, then doubled again. We created a genuine network with child helpline members sharing information with each other via peer exchanges and trainings. Together we have enthusiastically participated in international and regional conferences and consultations.

Many factors contributed to this success. We have a bottom up structure, with a clear and strong network ownership. Our membership representation in Child Helpline International’s
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governance mechanisms was an essential reason for the success. Child Helpline International is the world-leading organisation in capacity development of child helplines and advocacy based on child helpline data. We are recognised by international bodies such as the UNCRC treaty body, the UN and other regional organisations.

Child Helpline International is the only organisation in the world that engages in child helpline capacity development globally. We are also the only organisation that systematically collects data from helplines and advocate with key decision makers based on this data. Concurrently, the need has arisen for the strengthening and deepening of our thematic expertise in some key areas. These areas include: child protection, gender, violence against children, and sexual reproductive health rights.

Looking forward

Building on its achievements to date, Child Helpline International has identified a number of developments it needs to progress.

By making changes, we can seize opportunities such as the emerging Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). Staff profiles will need to be modified and developed in certain thematic areas like violence against children and child protection. We’ll need expertise on violence against children and be able to systemically collect data on upcoming SDG indicators that are of sufficient quality in terms of monitoring.

Child Helpline International needs to position child helplines as “entry points to child protection”, and establish expertise on the child helpline intersection with child protection systems (CPS). Child Helpline International and child helplines need to be the authority, in terms of the “entry point” aspect, referrals, data based advocacy to a CPS and advocacy to other entities on the workings of a CPS. It is essential we establish knowledge and best practice around this intersection to add value and protect children.
Child Helpline International needs to maintain our vision, mission and governing structure. We are a member based network and will remain so. We aim to continue our successful international and regional advocacy. We also aim to strengthen domestic advocacy. Many child helpline members are still struggling to translate their data into influencing domestic policy.

We will continue to have physical networking meetings, but with an alternative frequency pattern. We need to feature more thematic meetings that are not necessarily linked just to one region. We will develop online learning platforms and have less face-face training sessions.

Article 12 UNCRC will remain a core principal of Child Helpline International. The possibility of simply speaking to someone will remain as important as any action taken on the basis of the data. Article 12 will continue to guide our work, whilst Article 19 will become more important for our data and advocacy work, particularly in relation to the SDGs.

Programmatic expertise should be developed under the “Violence” and CPS/child helpline interface”. Regional programmatic coverage needs to continue, as a sudden shift to thematic support may undermine legitimacy. A matrix model could emerge where regional expertise is matched with thematic expertise and where a Child Helpline International Programme Manager serves a particular region but is also a global advisor on a particular topic.

Child Helpline International needs to strengthen relations with key players in Dutch civil society, in addition to our brand.

We will continue to support child helpline creation, but in a reactive rather than proactive way, based on request. Child Helpline International’s main emphasis will be on improving and assisting child helplines strengthen the quality of their operations and advocacy. How capacity development is delivered will evolve – with even more focus on thematic skills and impact.

Our child helpline membership will change. In order to become a member of our network, the highest quality of standards will need to be upheld. Our membership criteria will be modified and become clearer. As a result, we can expect to have a smaller number of child helpline members in the future. We will also monitor child helpline members against a set of minimum quality standards.

New technology platforms will be developed. This will enhance e-learning for child helpline members, online discussion platforms, online communities of practice and online spaces for a broader generation of knowledge sharing.

We had a strong focus on expanding the global network of child helplines during our first ten years. We actively reached out to and supported organisations that were willing to start child helpline services in their countries. Now, with nearly 190 organisations under the umbrella of Child Helpline International, we acknowledge having accumulated the critical mass of child helpline members and will refocus our strategic lens.
Child Helpline International now needs to give much stronger emphasis and weight to the stories provided by the over **20 million children and young people** that access child helplines within our network every year. With this information in hand, Child Helpline International has the responsibility to make a stronger stand and speak out on behalf of all children, including those that cannot access child helplines. Additionally, we need to make sure this information reaches people with the power to make decisions that bring about change in children’s lives. Consequently, stronger and a more effective advocacy is positioned at the heart of this strategy.

Spinning the wheel from the individual child contacting a child helpline to the change and impact on policy needs to become the main focus of Child Helpline International in the coming years. **Our data will be the main driver for this change** and hence we will need to improve the quality of this data by taking a stronger lead in the process from the collection to utilisation.

There is now a common understanding amongst child helpline members that **collecting data from the contacts made by children** is **a crucial aspect** of a child helpline service. Child helplines over the years have increasingly invested in developing data software solutions bespoke to their particular capacity and preferences and in training their counsellors in using them. Child Helpline International acknowledges this fact and has designed an approach to strengthening the data which supports member organisations in using their preferred means of collecting data.

Child Helpline International will strategically invest in raising awareness about the importance of data, and in building capacity in the collection, analysis, and use of this data amongst its child helpline members. In 2020 we would like to see all full child helpline members of Child Helpline International **regularly publishing well-prepared advocacy messages** on a national level based on strong and well collected sets of data.

We will continue to develop **close cooperation with like-minded agencies and key strategic partners** in order to achieve regional and global advocacy goals. Many of these partners will be both advocacy targets (e.g. advocate with UNICEF regional and country offices to invest in child helplines) and advocacy partners (e.g. joint advocacy together with UNICEF for the inclusion of a goal to end violence against children in the post-2015 agenda).

The infographic on the following page shows in visual form the actors, processes and outputs we expect to achieve in the 2016-2020 strategic period and how they relate to the goals detailed in the next section. It represents a continuous virtuous circle of reinforcing actions and results for the network and for its members, partners, funders and donors.
Our 2016-2020 strategy is focussed on achieving the following primary goal:

**To improve child protection systems through more robust child helplines**

This can be achieved through the following:

- Improving the quality of both access to and assistance from the child helplines.
- Improving the quality of data for advocacy,
- Strengthening our referral mechanisms and advocacy vis-à-vis child protection systems, whilst paying particular attention to the continuation of giving children a voice and strengthening efforts in addressing violence against children
- Ensuring quality assurance of child helplines and the adherence to minimum quality standards.
At Child Helpline International we view the relationships amongst children and young people, their national child helplines, and national child protection systems like this:

The achievement of this primary goal – improved child protection systems through developing more robust child helplines will depend on the achievement of the three complimentary goals below:

**Goal 1: Develop Child Helpline International’s programmatic knowledge and expand our thematic expertise.**

**Priorities:**

**1.1 Child Protection:** Achieve Child Protection System (CPS) improvement, based on data collected by helplines. Key aspects are mapping and coordination of referral systems and advocacy and targeting actors in CPS systems based on the data collected. When required, advocacy can also take place outside a CPS in order to advocate for its systemic improvements. Child Helpline International will develop expertise in this area and provide training and guidelines. Additionally, with capacity development in national advocacy and data collection for child helpline members.
1.2 **Combatting Violence:** Provide global data capture and monitoring of Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) under the area of violence against children. This will entail strengthening in-house knowledge on violence against children, setting up monitoring systems, and engage with the wider SDG community on the area of violence. Strengthening the Child Helpline International brand will be a crucial component in having an even stronger voice on violence against children than today.

1.3 **Voice:** The primary importance of helplines as a vehicle for securing UNCRC Art 12 will continue. Being there as a listener, no matter what happens further regarding referrals, is important in its own right. Building the capacity of helplines to listen to, to be a good listener on a variety of topics, including those that are difficult or controversial, is of prime importance. Capacity building will initially be targeting the following thematic areas:
- Counselling practice
- Sexual Reproductive Health Rights
- Gender: Best practices for child helplines
- Child helplines in conflict zones or emergency situations

1.4 **New technology platforms** and E-learning curricular will be developed towards gearing up capacity building for child helpline member, online discussion platform, online communities of practice, spaces for knowledge sharing and knowledge generation more broadly.

**Goal 2: Improve evidence-based advocacy.**

**Priorities:**

2.1 **Improve the quality, capture, analysis and use of child helpline data:** Child Helpline International exists in order to empower children. We do this by providing them with a voice and then take their voice to decision makers. This way we add value to the individual’s voice by creating an impact that benefits all children. The associated collective mind-set, attitude and behaviour around child helpline data and what we achieve with it, is what constitutes our network. We put “Children’s Voices” at the heart of this strategy and will use this strategic period to take our data mining, analysis and its usage to the next level. We will fully capitalise on this major collective asset by developing a truly data-driven organisation. We will be fully capable of telling meaningful stories that resonate both intellectually and emotionally with our audiences. Child Helpline International will work towards a quicker, more up-to-date and user friendly collection of data. We’ll make this more comprehensive, qualitative and quantitative. This will require a backbone of skilled people. We will need analysts, statisticians, researchers, visionaries and storytellers. That combine a sophisticated use of the right technology and social media. By collaborating with research bodies and statisticians, we will also look to external data sources to enhance and fortify our conclusions and recommendations.

2.2 **Refine the selection, approach to and interaction with our advocacy targets:** Child helplines are important parts of national child protection systems. Often they are a child’s first entry point to protection mechanisms. Their referral function places child helplines in the centre of child protection systems. Strengthening these systems is at the core of Child Helpline International’s work.
Helpline International’s Theory of Change and will logically determine our advocacy efforts throughout this strategic period. Child Helpline International will organise this collective effort in three distinctive steps:
Build capacity amongst our child helpline membership that will lead to a more sophisticated national advocacy carried out by the helplines themselves;
Spearhead global and regional advocacy and build strong relationships with global and regional influencers;
Develop Child Helpline International into a real campaigning powerhouse that truly represents children’s voices at policy level.

Goal 3: Build an effective & sustainable organisation

Priorities:

3.1 Sustainability: Continue the expansion of Child Helpline International’s donor pool and our ability to mobilise resources. We will focus on expanding this to fund the operations of Child Helpline International. We will implement a dynamic and adaptable resource mobilisation strategy and increase our outreach and dialogue with our donors. This will be done in line with the building and strengthening of the Child Helpline International’s brand and development of a media and PR strategy. We will continue the focus on efficiency and operating lean principles: we’ll develop a culture of organisational agility; putting systems in place to spot opportunities and trends. Also, building processes to translate organisational priorities into focussed action. We will position Child Helpline International as an excellent employer that is able to attract a talented and dedicated workforce. Our employees will be valued and be able to develop their individual skills and abilities.

3.2 Accountability: Continue to ensure the principles of good governance and network representation at the highest levels of Child Helpline International’s decision-making. We will commit to the highest levels of accountability to our child helpline members and donors and to international standards via the IATI platform. We will enhance mechanisms for capturing feedback (satisfaction questionnaires, Child Helpline International’s complaints policy) from the needs of our child helpline membership to via the online platform. Child Helpline International will remain fully accountable to the child helpline members of the network.

3.3 Quality: Together with our network we will define clear, representative and transparent minimum quality standards for child helplines. These will be defined by the network child helpline members themselves. We will enhance our ability to monitor the Minimum Quality Standards and the development of strategies to support the child helpline membership to meet these. We will conduct a review and revision of Child Helpline International’s child helpline membership criteria.

Other transversal priorities 2016-2020:

- **Impact measurement:** Child Helpline International will improve its monitoring and increase focus on impact and results. We will enhance our ability to generate reliable data capable of providing world-leading monitoring feeds into the monitoring of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

- **Build strong partnerships with key stakeholders on global and regional levels:** Child Helpline International has set itself an ambitious agenda for the coming years with...
a significant shift in focus and approach. This agenda requires us to enter new terrain and expand our operations into areas where partnerships will take on even greater strategic importance. Therefore, we will build and expand on alliances that are of equal benefit to all partners. We will do this by ensuring availability of the right mix of sufficient capacity, expertise, resources, reach and technology.

- **Develop and grow a strong brand as the leading expert in first-hand, evidence-based advocacy on child rights:** Child Helpline International will review its current brand in line with the 2016-2020 Strategy. We will develop an innovative, child friendly and global brand that will identity and drive both our short and long-term social goals. We will be activating, processing and amplifying children’s voices while simultaneously strengthening our internal identity, cohesion and capacity as a collective of likeminded organisations.

**Drivers that will strengthen achievement on Child Helpline International’s goals:**

- **Programmatic adaptability:** The extent to which Child Helpline International is able to emerge as a competent leader in the areas of child protection, violence against children and the Sustainable Development Goals. The ability of staff to renew and gain new skills and deeper thematic expertise. The organisation will need to adapt to new ways of working. This implies a radical restructuring and definition of core competencies.

- **Technology:** The strengthening and deepening of partnerships with telecoms in order to have more toll-free numbers in addition to greater diversity with the platforms that are used for children to access a helpline.

- **Enhancing Partnerships:** The ability of Child Helpline International and its child helpline members to create change. Not only with its own efforts based on its own data, but creating change in partnerships with other entities such as other NGOs and UN agencies etc. The ability of Child Helpline International to not only advocate to regional bodies but to work with them in achieving this desired change. Child Helpline International’s ability to share data with other partners that can be used for their own advocacy on issues of common concern.

- **Financial sustainability:** The ability to attract funding partnerships and core support for Child Helpline International’s operations and activities.

- **Quality strengthening:** The revamping and monitoring of child helpline membership criteria to ensure that minimum quality standards are in place.

- **Developing and growing a strong brand:** Be the leading expert in first-hand evidence-based advocacy on child rights.

- **Improving:** Enhancing quality, analysis and visualisation of child helpline data.

- **Research, evidence and impact:** Partnerships with academia and research bodies will be crucial in demonstrating and communicating the impact of Child Helpline International’s work.

- **Building capacity:** The development of comprehensive E-learning curriculum will be a key driver in sustaining the Child Helpline International network and maintaining its legitimacy.
## Budget

### ESTIMATED BUDGET 2016-2020 (in Euros€)

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We are Child Helpline International.
We voice children’s needs to drive policy change.