



e. **Safe.** Safe. Safe. Safe.  
ng. **Thriving.** Thriving.  
d. **Heard.** Heard. Heard

2030 Strategy



# Contents

Who we are	3
State of play for children with disabilities	4
Our 2030 Strategy	8
<b>Able Child</b> Africa Network	<b>10</b>
Strategic framework	16
<b>Safe</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Thriving</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Heard</b>	<b>22</b>
Response to the climate emergency	26
The four corners	28
Our 2030 vision and aims	32





# Who we are

We are **Able Child.**

We support a network of African organisations that **protect**, **educate** and **amplify** the voices of children and young people with disabilities.

Together, we work across Africa, breaking down barriers to inclusion so that children with disabilities are able to thrive.

And we have been doing this **for the last 40 years.**



## We are:

### Collaborative.

---

We believe we can achieve more by working together.

### Courageous.

---

We are bold and agile, with the courage to innovate.

### Accountable.

---

We are accountable to the children we work with.



# The state of play for children with disabilities

**1 in 10 children** globally have a disability. That is 240 million children, and this number is expected to double by 2050.

Despite the decades of work since the ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the UN Convention on the Right of Persons with Disabilities, **children with disabilities continue to be left behind**. They are consistently excluded, discounted and discriminated against in all walks of life, leading to health inequalities, a lack of basic education and financial deprivation.

The impact on children with disabilities is devastating.



Children with disabilities are:

- More likely to **live in poverty**.
- Twice as likely to **never attend school**.
- Three times more likely to be **underweight**.



Children with disabilities are also less safe. They are:

- Four times more likely to experience **physical violence**.
- Three times more likely to be **sexually assaulted**.
- 17 times more likely to be **institutionalised**.

**Girls with disabilities** are at particular risk of violence. They are 10 times more likely to experience gender-based violence than those without disabilities, and an estimated 70% of girls with intellectual disabilities will be sexually abused before their 18th birthday.

## In Africa...

It is thought that there are over 80 million people living with a disability in Africa. In East and Southern Africa alone, there are estimated to be 29 million children in East and Southern Africa living with a disability.

1. World Health Organization (2022). Global report on health equity for persons with disabilities. 2. UNICEF (2022). Seen, Counted, Included: Using data to shed light on the well-being of children with disabilities. 3. World Health Organization (2023) Factsheet on Disability. 4. UNICEF (2023). Children with Disabilities in Eastern and Southern Africa: A statistical overview of their well-being.



Children with disabilities are not a homogenous group. Each child is unique and lives with a distinct set of circumstances which determines their ability to thrive.

A child's age compounds with their socioeconomic background, gender, and race to deepen and complicate the exclusion they experience, and their perceived naivety means they are given little opportunity to communicate their needs or determine the types of support they receive.

Services for children with disabilities still fail to recognise or respond to the intersectional barriers children with disabilities face. Healthcare, education and social protection services remain inaccessible with physical, communication and attitudinal barriers limiting their participation and **allowing children with disabilities to fall through the cracks.**

We know that these inequalities can lead to additional and lifelong psychosocial barriers. Over 41% of children with disabilities are more likely to feel discriminated against, over 51% of children with disabilities are more likely to feel unhappy and one in five children with disabilities have lower expectations of a better life. The emotional impact of exclusion can embed feelings of inadequacy, which can silence and disempower children with disabilities all the way through adulthood.

**Able Child exists to change this.**



Creating lasting change for children with disabilities begins by **working within the global frameworks** that uphold their rights.

---

We deliver our work within the principles of these frameworks, taking a human rights approach. This means we believe children with disabilities have a right to dignity, freedom and equality, not only as a means to create a more prosperous society, **but as an end in itself**. This means their **self-determination** is fundamental in securing these rights.



## The UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD)

Article 7 of the UNCRPD states that children with disabilities should enjoy rights and freedoms on an **equal basis with other children**, underlining the best interests of the child and ensuring that 'children with disabilities have the right to express their views freely on all matters affecting them.' The UNCRPD stresses that inclusive education is a **fundamental human right** for children with disabilities, defining inclusive education as mainstream education environments where all children are accommodated to **learn and play together**.



## The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)

Under the terms of the UNCRC every child has the right to **survival, protection and education**. The specific commitments to address barriers faced by children with disabilities are outlined in Article 23 which states that 'a child with a disability has the right to live a full and decent life with dignity and, as far as possible, independence and to play an active part in the community.'



## The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)

In all our work we are committed to the central principle of the Sustainable Development Goals, that **no one should be left behind**. This means that **equity** is critical in achieving development outcomes and the barriers that continue to limit the participation of children with disabilities must be removed.



## Youth 2030

Youth 2030 makes commitments to engage and work with young people, recognising that the international community will benefit from their views, insights and ideas to ensure sustainable development for all. This means we need to 'build the agency and advance the rights of young people in all their diversity around the world.'



## The **state of play** for civil society

Despite the evident need, only a small fraction of aid funding is targeted towards children with disabilities, which has meant that disability-focused organisations in Africa have long been under-resourced and under-supported. Traditionally receiving a large portion of their funding from overseas, the recent introduction of legislation constraining funding to NGOs, along with the unprecedented scale of COVID-19, has forced many of these organisations to close all together.

For African organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) the situation is particularly difficult. As organisations representing a marginalised group, they also experience discrimination and prejudice, receiving less funding and fewer invitations to participate or influence. Even where specific disability-focused funding or support is available, OPDs that work for children with disabilities are usually the last to receive it, unable to compete for space with larger players.





## Our 2030 strategy

With a changing landscape comes a changing role for Able Child in how to best support children with disabilities in Africa.

For the last 40 years Able Child has been part of a progressive change to support African organisations working to improve the lives of children with disabilities. As our reach has grown over the last ten years, we began a process to analyse what our role has been, what it is now and what it should be in the future.

Following an extensive 18-month consultation and review process, we have developed a new way forward. A direction that creates an organisation which is fit for purpose, that builds a model aligned with the interests of our current partners in Africa, and ensures we are best placed to achieve our vision of ensuring no child with a disability is left behind.

**This is our 2030 Strategy.**





We are undergoing an **operational shift**. Able Child has always been a 'vehicle' for African registered organisations to build expertise, access funding and to advocate for change. Our new strategy takes this role to the next logical step as we support the creation of a new **network**, cementing our partners at the centre of who we are.



We have identified two strategic priorities: we want to have greater reach and expand our influence across Africa, and we believe transitioning to a network model is the best way to achieve this.

This is a journey that will begin with the incubation of a new network model within our current structure, allowing a supportive environment for the network to learn and grow. Once up and running, the network will have greater decision making power over the organisation and decide how we prioritise our activities. At the same time, we will be expanding to new regions, confirming our presence in Southern Africa as well as expanding into West Africa, as we look to form a wider network across the continent.

To support this growth, we will embark on an international expansion of our operations. The new strategy will see a significant expansion of our activities in the US as we look to build new funding partners and influence in the run up to 2030. Following this expansion we will look for future growth opportunities as we raise the profile of the brand in order to secure more funding and have greater influence on the international stage.

Growth & Influence	Building a Network
Expanding our reach and impact across Africa, working with more organisations in more countries.	Implementation of a new network model, for African organisations supporting children with disabilities.
Expansion of our income portfolio outside the UK, moving first into the US and then looking at further opportunities.	Creation of a new body or structure that meaningfully shifts power to member organisations within the network.
Raising the profile of the organisational brand, so we have greater influence on the international stage.	Development of a powerful joint voice to speak with expertise on the issues of children with disabilities.



# Able Child Africa Network

We are implementing a new network model to bring together the leading African organisations working with and for children with disabilities across the continent.



## Why we need the network

### Broaden our impact.

Principally we want to do more. We are really proud of our partnership model and it has been a strong driver of our success over recent years. But we believe we can achieve **greater impact as a wider network** of likeminded organisations across Africa.

### Positioning ourselves.

This will be the leading network working solely to improve the lives of children with disabilities in Africa. We will bring together expertise from the best African NGOs to **lead the conversation** on what works for children with disabilities in development planning.



### Changing landscape.

There have been significant social shifts in our area of work that requires us to respond. The anti-racism movement, alongside dialogues about unequal power dynamics and outdated, colonial approaches to development brings with it a need to be self-critical and a **responsibility to adapt** to new ways of working.

### Listening to our partners.

Our partners told us they wanted to do things differently. They want to take the lead and make decisions about how we support and allocate our funds. They wanted to challenge extractive reporting and to have direct relationships with donors. They believed they were **stronger together**. So, we listened.

# Who is in the network

The network is made up of the leading African organisations who share a common vision of a **'world in which no child with a disability is left behind.'**

The network is for organisations who were **founded** in and **based in** Africa, and who work specifically on **improving the lives of children with disabilities.**



# What the network does

We **protect**, **educate** and **amplify** the voices of children and young people with disabilities, so they are able to thrive.

We do this by:



**Delivering** high-quality programmes, generating evidence of what works and building best practice in inclusive programming for children with disabilities.

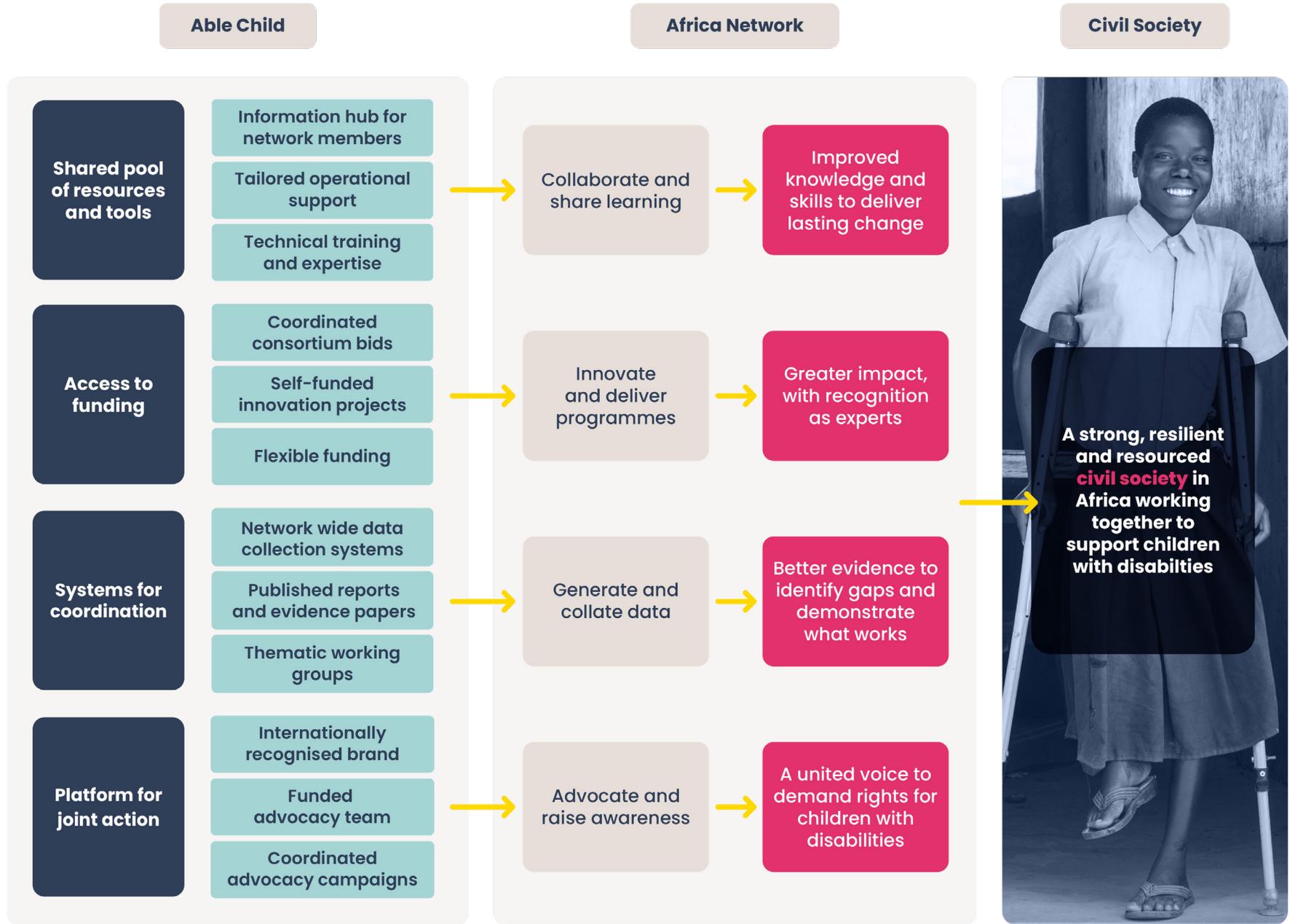


**Standing up** for the rights of children with disabilities, amplifying their voices and creating change by influencing governments and other international allies.

## The role for data

Evidence underpins all of our work. We work together to collate data on the barriers children with disabilities experience and generate evidence for what works in inclusive programming. We then use this information to deepen our impact for children with disabilities and to influence governments and other international allies.

# The network model





## How we work

We believe we are **stronger together**.

Members will gain access to a wealth of knowledge, both technical and operational, from like-minded organisations that will build expertise and resilience across the network.

The network members will then be equipped to play a leading role supporting movements and other organisations of persons with disabilities in their respective countries, working to improve services, hold their governments to account and deliver lasting change for children with disabilities.

Network members will

- Share expertise, learning and evidence on best practice.
- Participate in joint-funded projects and consortium-based delivery.
- Contribute to coordinated systems of data collection to identify gaps and prove models of success.
- Develop joint campaigns and advocacy messaging to uphold the rights of children with disabilities globally.

## Who we influence

As a network our **voice is louder**.

This creates an opportunity to get the attention of powerful global allies and influence change. We plan to use our joint voice to influence, petition and inspire the following groups:

### Broader civil society

We will persuade and inform local civil society to strengthen the inclusion of children with disabilities in the programmes that they deliver.

### Local government

We will co-design disability-inclusive policies with local government and hold them to account on financing for children with disabilities.

### Donors

We will demand disability-inclusive and targeted funding specifically for organisations working for children with disabilities.

### International allies

We will ensure children with disabilities are not left behind by international INGOs, UN agencies or other global influencers.

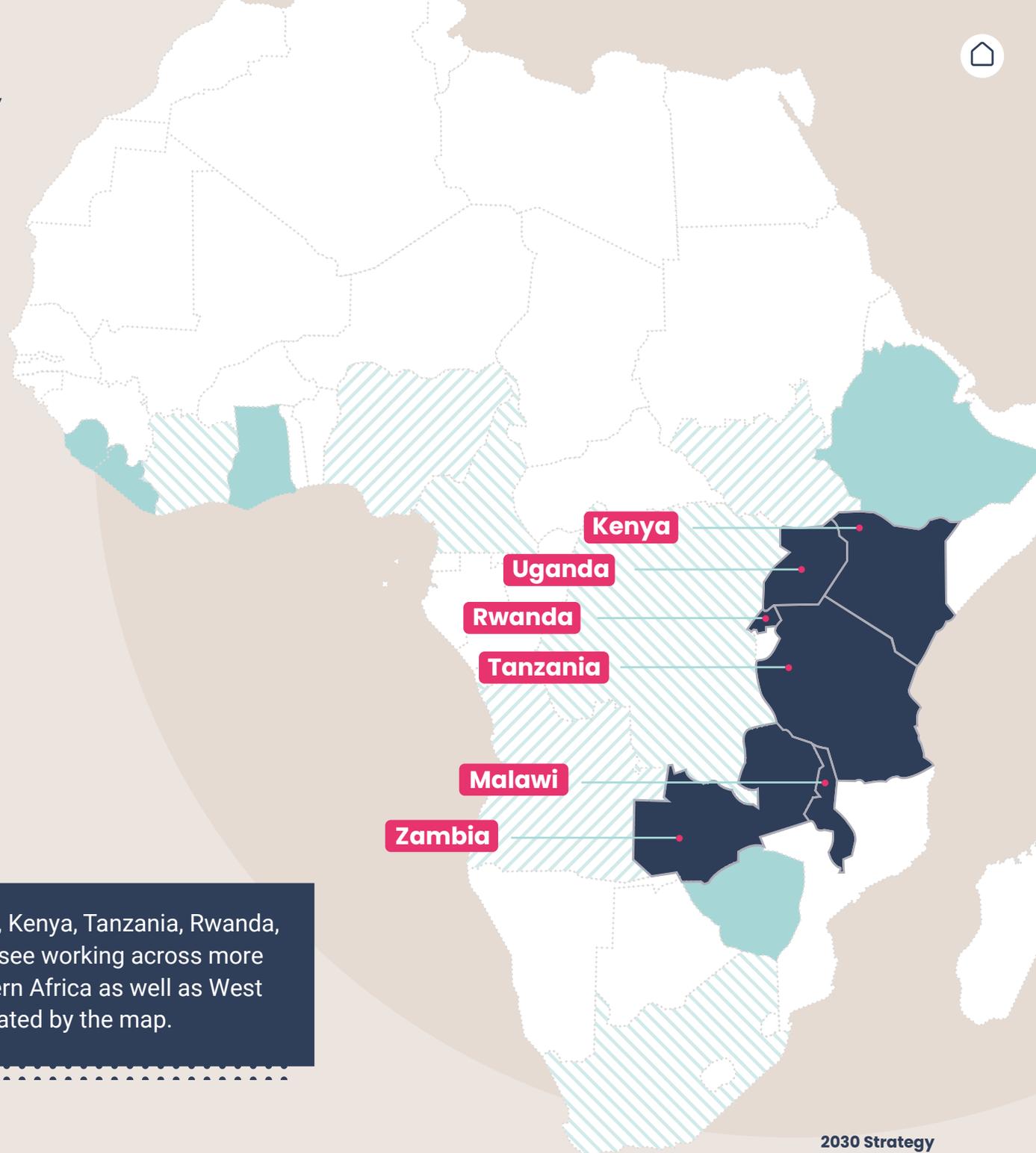
# The network journey

## Where the network will operate

We want to work **across** Africa. In order to be a fully representative African network, we need to broaden our reach. By 2030 we are looking to have active members in **at least three regions** on the continent, growing our presence in Southern Africa, alongside an expansion to West Africa.

This growth will be led by the network themselves, who will choose how and where we grow. Our priority will always be focused on working with African organisations who work for children with disabilities and see value in joining the network.

Currently working in Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda, Malawi and Zambia, we foresee working across more countries in East and Southern Africa as well as West Africa by 2030, as demonstrated by the map.





# Governance

Our governance structure will transition power over to network members.

The aim is for an autonomous body made up of representatives from network members that will convene regularly to determine network priorities, strategy, and spending. It will feed into our current Board structures, ensuring they are more representative of the network members and ensure that the members have power within this structure to determine organisational direction.

The network itself will play an important role in determining what exactly the governance setup will be. This shift will be phased to ensure we create something that works in practice, rather than looks good on paper. We are also mindful of not overburdening the members or jeopardising the stability of the network during this transition.

# Steps to 2030

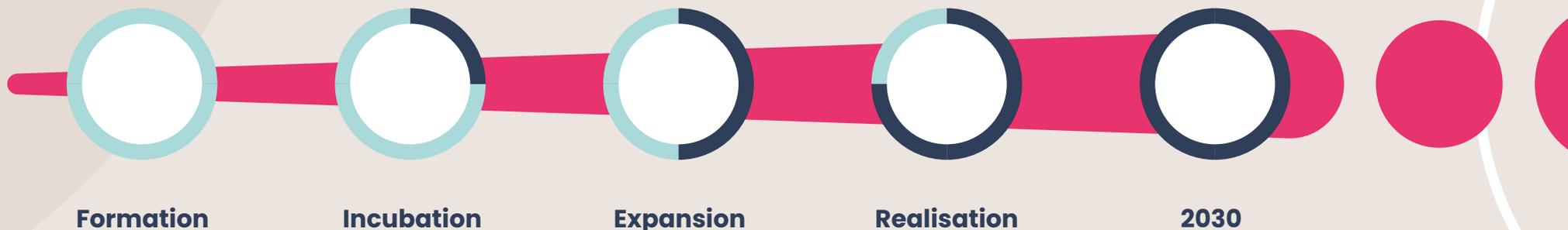
The development and realisation of the network will be a journey. One that is not prescribed but will be led by the network themselves. We see four primary steps in this process from the formation through to 2030.

**Formation** Creation of the network and its key decision-making structures.

**Incubation** Delivery of the first activities with support from Able Child.

**Expansion** Expansion of the network into new regions across Africa.

**Realisation** International recognition of an autonomous network.



A well-respected network delivering change for children with disabilities across Africa.

# Safe. Thriving. Heard.

## Safe.

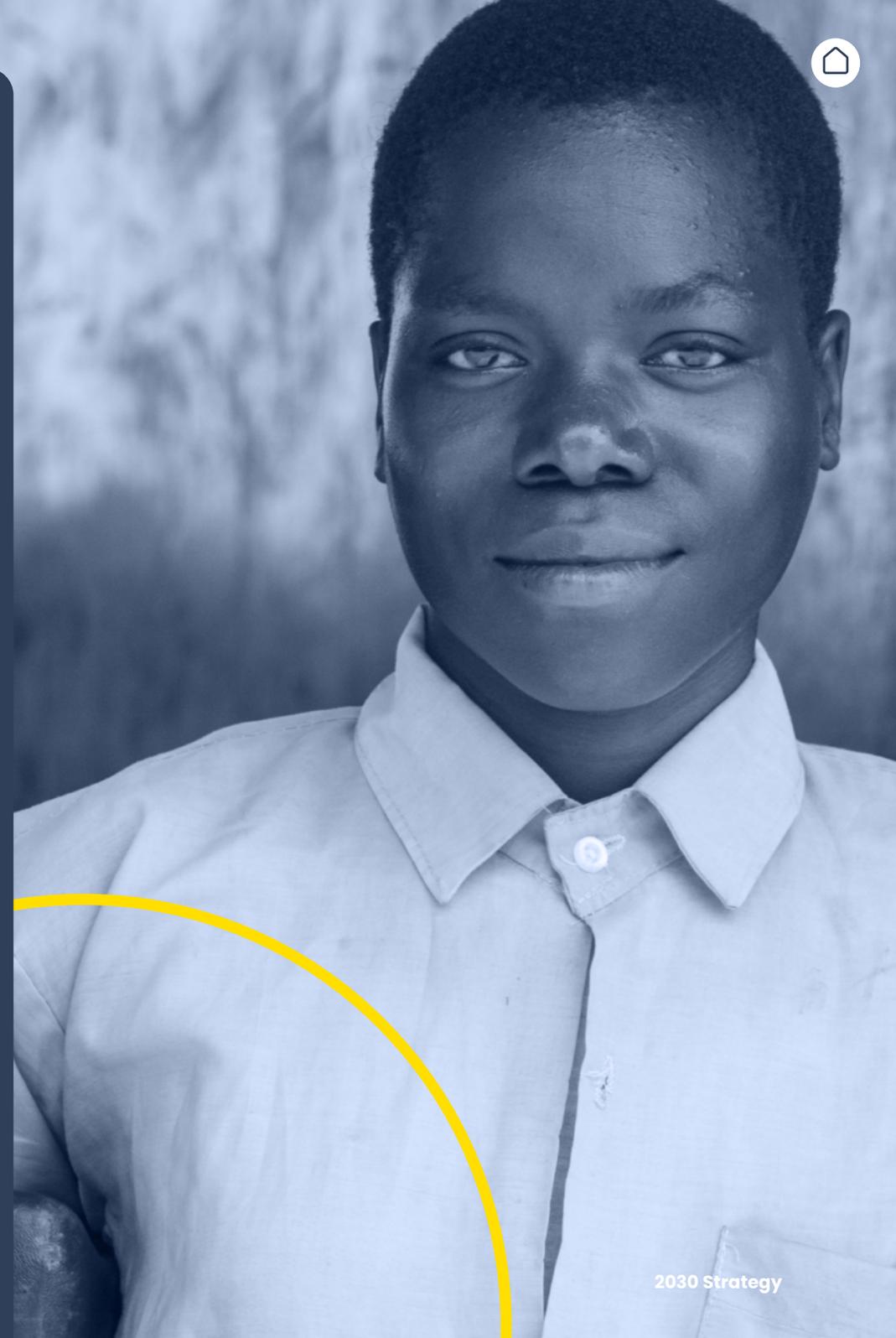
We stand up for the rights of children and young people with disabilities to ensure they are protected and included in their communities.

## Thriving.

We ensure that children and young people with disabilities have access to an education and the services they need to succeed.

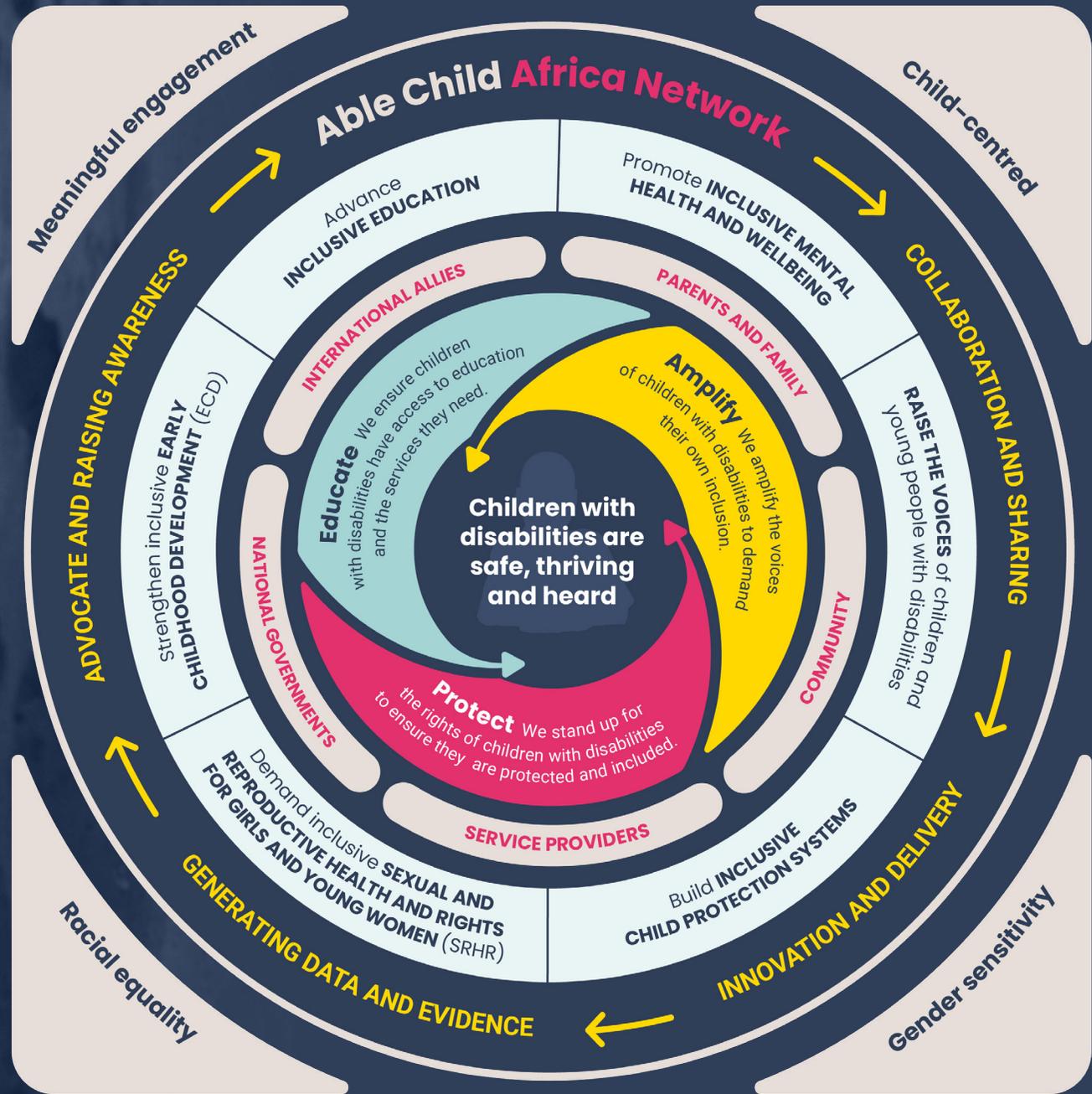
## Heard.

We support children and young people with disabilities to be confident and resilient, amplifying their voices to demand their own inclusion.





# Theory of change





# Safe

Children with disabilities have the

**right to feel safe.**

In the places we work, child protection systems often fail children with disabilities. Safeguarding services and workforces are poorly equipped and lack the expertise to deal with the specific risks that children with disabilities face. If and when they are abused, children with disabilities are also less likely to seek justice for the abuse.

Girls with disabilities are at an increased risk and face further barriers, compounded by their disability and their gender. Many girls with disabilities have not been educated on their sexual and reproductive rights and are not equipped with the knowledge to demand protection or the inclusive services they need. They have a right to be safe.



## How we do it

Build inclusive child protection systems.

- ✓ Design effective safeguarding practices for children with disabilities.
- ✓ Ensure children with disabilities have access to justice.

Demand inclusive sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) for girls and young women.

- ✓ Overcome barriers to SRHR experienced by girls and young women with disabilities.
- ✓ Increase access to inclusive water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services for girls with disabilities.



What does **success** look like.

- Development organisations, donors and government agencies are integrating a disability-inclusive approach to their child protection and safeguarding work based on our shared evidence and learnings.
- Facilities and services are more accessible for children with disabilities and fewer children with disabilities are being denied access to justice on the basis of their disability.
- Solutions to including children with disabilities in mainstream water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) programmes are in place, with greater participation of girls with disabilities in the design of these interventions.
- Education modules for girls and young women with disabilities related to their sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) have been developed and the girls and young women with disabilities are better equipped to demand access to SRHR services.



## WHAT'S NEW

Since partnering with Save the Children International in 2021 to create the first international Disability-inclusive child safeguarding guidelines, our reputation in the sector has been growing as a leader in inclusive child safeguarding. As part of our new strategy, we are expanding the rollout of our disability-inclusive child safeguarding support to organisations and practitioners across development and humanitarian sectors, to ensure that the safety of children with disabilities is prioritised across the work we all deliver.



# Thriving

All children have the **right to an education.**

Early childhood is a critical time for children with disabilities to access key services that provide the foundation for their life-long learning and participation. Despite this, early detection of children with disabilities is much lower than the prevalence, and many children with disabilities face significant barriers in accessing the early childhood services they need.

In later childhood, children with disabilities often continue to be systematically left behind in education provision. Children with disabilities are more likely to be out of school than their peers. Once in school, a lack of accommodations, inaccessible environments and poor teacher training hinders their participation, as well as their ability to transition to further education and into employment.



## How we do it

### Strengthening inclusive Early Childhood Development (ECD)

- ✓ Improve early identification of children with disabilities.
- ✓ Upskill service providers to include children with disabilities in early years support.

### Advancing inclusive education.

- ✓ Support a successful transition from primary to secondary school for children with disabilities.
- ✓ Equip young people with disabilities with the tools they need to enter employment.



## What does **success** look like.

- Our early identification and child-functioning tools developed and tested in Kenya, Uganda and Malawi have been rolled out for wider adoption in the countries where we work.
- Governments and their delivery partners are integrating community-based provision for disability-inclusive early years education into education programming.
- A greater number of children with disabilities are successfully transitioning from primary to secondary school, with evidence collected from our interventions to promote wider adoption.
- In the countries where we work, young people with disabilities have better access to employability programmes and will be better represented in mainstream livelihood programmes.



### WHAT'S NEW

The unemployment rate for persons with disabilities is **five times higher** than persons without disabilities. This is because young people with disabilities face multiple barriers to employment including unsafe environments, stigma, and inaccessible employment services. As part of our new strategy, we want to design effective and sustainable interventions alongside young people with disabilities that help them **transition from education to employment** so they can thrive.





# Heard

Children with disabilities have the **right to be heard.**

Children with disabilities are more likely to experience poor mental health or a psychosocial disability, due to the stigma, discrimination, and exclusion they experience in their daily lives. The misconception that children with disabilities are in some way different, that their lives have less worth, or that they do not feel the same as children without disabilities, can destroy their sense of identity and self-worth and limits their ability to demand their inclusion.

Agency is an integral part of their mental health and wellbeing. To feel confident and resilient, children with disabilities must be listened to, treated as equals, and actively involved in all decisions affecting them. They need to be heard.



## How we do it

### Promoting mental health and wellbeing

- ✓ Champion mental health resilience for children and young people with disabilities.
- ✓ Inspire children and young people with disabilities to become powerful self-advocates.

### Raising the voices of children and young people with disabilities

- ✓ Call for the inclusion of children and young people with disabilities in climate justice.
- ✓ Ensure children and young people with disabilities' representation in the post-2030 agenda.



What does **success** look like.

- The existing gap in mental health provision for children with disabilities is closed, in countries where we work.
- Mental health support is included as a cross-cutting issue across our programming, where all the children and young people with disabilities we work with have the opportunity to learn about their rights and feel better informed and equipped to demand their own inclusion.
- Young climate activists with disabilities from Africa are represented in national and international climate justice groups and in climate talks.
- The post-2030 global agenda is decided by and with children with disabilities.



### WHAT'S NEW

Out of the 169 SDG targets, **only seven mention persons with disabilities** and even fewer mention children with disabilities explicitly. Children and young people with disabilities were overlooked in global conversations about COVID-19 recovery and have had limited opportunity to participate in climate action. **This is not good enough.** One of our key priorities over the next strategic period, will be amplifying the voices of children with disabilities so they are heard and encouraging their leadership on the global stage.



The full **strategic framework** is detailed below.

Goal	Action	Rights Focus	Thematic Focus	Activities
<b>SAFE:</b> Children and young people with disabilities are protected and included by communities.	<b>PROTECT:</b> We stand up for the rights of children and young people with disabilities to ensure they are protected and included in their communities.	<b>The right to feel safe.</b>	<b>Build</b> inclusive child protection systems.	<b>Design</b> effective safeguarding practices for children with disabilities.
				<b>Facilitate</b> greater access to justice for children with disabilities.
			<b>Demand</b> inclusive sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) for girls and young women.	<b>Overcome</b> barriers to SRHR experienced by girls and young women with disabilities.
				<b>Increase</b> access to inclusive water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) services for girls with disabilities.
<b>THRIVING:</b> Children and young people with disabilities have the services and support they need to succeed.	<b>EDUCATE:</b> We ensure that children and young people with disabilities have access to an education and the services they need to succeed.	<b>The right to an education.</b>	<b>Strengthen</b> inclusive Early Childhood Development (ECD).	<b>Improve</b> early identification of children with disabilities.
				<b>Upskill</b> service providers to include children with disabilities in early years support.
			<b>Advance</b> inclusive education.	<b>Support</b> a successful transition from primary to secondary school for children with disabilities.
				<b>Equip</b> young people with disabilities with the tools they need to enter employment.
<b>HEARD:</b> Children and young people with disabilities feel confident and resilient, and are able to demand their own inclusion.	<b>AMPLIFY:</b> We support children and young people with disabilities to be confident and resilient, amplifying their voices to demand their own inclusion.	<b>The right to be heard.</b>	<b>Promote</b> inclusive mental health and wellbeing.	<b>Champion</b> mental health resilience for children and young people with disabilities.
				<b>Inspire</b> children and young people with disabilities to become powerful self-advocates.
			<b>Raise</b> the voices of children and young people with disabilities.	<b>Call</b> for the inclusion of children and young people with disabilities in climate justice.
				<b>Ensure</b> children and young people with disabilities' representation in the post-2030 agenda.



## Open to **change**

This framework has been developed in collaboration with our members to encompass all their organisational priorities over the next six years.

However, a lot can happen in this time, and we recognise that our strategic priorities may shift in line with a changing world. Global pandemics, climate change or humanitarian disasters may require us to work in areas not covered in this framework. We also envisage that by 2030 the network will be a fully functioning autonomous body who may have different ideas on which areas they wish to work on. This framework provides a direction of travel but is flexible in order to enable and not hinder the network's ability to deliver lasting change for children with disabilities.





# Response to the climate emergency

Climate change is taking the biggest toll on the world's most marginalised. This is not an accident. The failure of governments and international agencies to effectively tackle structural inequalities has left many people from low-income countries at risk of the most significant effects of climate change.

---

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change has recognised that people with disabilities are up to four times more likely to be impacted by climate change than those without disabilities. For children with disabilities who are already excluded from basic services, emergency responses and access to clean water sanitation and hygiene, the impact is greater. Yet, their age combined with their disability has meant they have had limited opportunities to participate in conversations around climate responses, meaning solutions are not inclusive and do not necessarily meet their needs.

As an international development organisation working in disability rights, we have a fundamental responsibility to be climate-conscious in our work and to amplify the voices of children and young people with disabilities in conversations around the climate crisis and any proposed solutions.



We are committed to reducing our carbon footprint and taking an environmentally responsible and sustainable approach to our work. We commit to doing this in **three main ways:**



### Fly less.

Due to the nature of our work, our carbon footprint is relatively high compared to the size of the organisation. This is due to regular long-haul flights between our operational offices and Africa. We are committed to reducing this footprint and the number of flights we make over the next strategic period. We are taking our first steps toward this by employing staff in the places where we work, so we can limit the distances needed to travel and reduce our dependence on long-haul flights. We will **only fly internationally when necessary** and **continue to embrace technology** to ensure strong and consistent communication with our members.



### Be conscious.

We will be climate conscious in our programme delivery by:

- **Delivering new projects** that focus on climate justice for children with disabilities.
- **Integrating climate resilience** for children with disabilities in all our programmes.
- **Including climate change risks and mitigations** for children with disabilities in our planning.



### Amplify.

We will amplify the voices of children and young people with disabilities in global conversations by:

- **Providing** information and resources in accessible, child-friendly formats, that enable children with disabilities to participate in climate action.
- **Standing up** for the rights for children with disabilities to be part of the global conversation on the climate crisis.
- **Coordinating and funding** child and youth-led campaigns on inclusive climate justice.

## The four corners

We have identified four corners that underpin our organisation and all the work covered in this strategy. We know that these cross-cutting areas will fundamentally strengthen and accelerate our ability to improve the lives of children with disabilities, while ensuring that our approach is equitable and does no harm.



## Meaningful engagement

### What we mean

Meaningful engagement is an approach that puts people with disabilities at the front and centre of all decision making and delivery. It asserts that adults, young people and children with disabilities know best what works for them, and by listening to their solutions we can ensure longer-lasting and more meaningful change.

How we will implement **meaningful engagement** through our programmes

We will invite adults, young people and children with disabilities to purposefully participate in the design and delivery of our work, where their opinions, insights and lived experience can be expressed. We will fight for organisations of persons with disabilities (OPDs) and in particular children and young people with disabilities, to have equal participation in global decision making so they are able to demand their inclusion.

...and throughout our organisation

As part of an international disability rights movement, the majority of which are OPDs, we commit to ensuring all internal operations are appropriate for people with disabilities. We will strive to ensure our workplace remains an inclusive environment, eliminating the barriers for people with disabilities to join our team and support them to progress through the organisation. We will ensure their voices are heard in all decisions that impact them.



# Child-centred

## What we mean

A child-centred approach focuses on the needs and rights of children. In practice, this means understanding global problems through the viewpoint of children and designing interventions that primarily respond to their specific experiences and uphold their rights. For us, a child-centred approach requires us to educate, equip, and enable children to make decisions about their lives and to become their own agents of change.

How we will implement a **child-centred** approach through our programmes

Our programme design process will be informed by the experiences and realities of children with disabilities as described by children themselves. Child rights clubs, child-led campaigns and youth champions will be core aspects of our project design, providing children with disabilities with opportunities to learn about their rights and demand their inclusion.



## ...and throughout our organisation

Our Inclusive Safeguarding Policy takes a child-centred approach, drawing on consultations with children with disabilities to identify risks and co-design actions which mitigate and prevent harm. We also commit to sharing and promoting our child-friendly version to ensure children are informed of their right to be kept safe in our work, and how to report. Our communications and associated consent procedures are child-centred, where children are given the power to determine how, where and when their images and stories are shared, to ensure they retain as much control over the process as possible.



# Racial equality

## What we mean

Racial equity is the intentional and continual process of eliminating racial disparities in our workplace and through all our work. We believe that we are ultimately accountable to the communities where we work, and to be truly accountable, we must ensure we are an anti-racist organisation. This requires us to confront institutional racism and old colonial structures, both within our organisation and in relation to the work that we do. We also believe it means shifting power to the organisations we work with, putting our members in meaningful decision-making positions and listening to new and different ways of working.

## How we will implement **racial equality** through our programmes

Our programmatic areas and approach to delivery will be directly informed by the expertise and priorities of the organisations we work with. We will honestly and consciously stop asking organisations we work with to adhere to our

own ideas or donor priorities. We will offer some flexible funding for programmes that support organisational growth instead of requiring rigid adherence to project outcomes. We will advocate to donors that extensive reporting requirements are extractive, embed harmful power relations and are not disability inclusive, while promoting better and direct relationships between donors and our members.

## ...and throughout our organisation

We will embed racial equality into our organisation, ensuring policies and practices are underpinned by racial equality principles that proactively address discrimination and disadvantage. We will systematically move capacity, resources, and ownership to the countries where we work, employing more individuals in the places where we work. We will regularly review our recruitment practices to eliminate bias and discrimination and commit to ensuring more diversity in leadership roles in the organisation. We will constantly review our language and terminology to ensure it is inclusive, inviting input from staff with lived experience and external experts. We will continue to be self-critical, enabling employees and Trustees to voice issues about inequality and identify any areas where there is a need for change.



# Gender sensitivity

## What we mean

Gender sensitivity is the ability to acknowledge existing gender differences and understand the inequalities that exist. Disability and gender often intersect to compound the discrimination girls with disabilities experience, and adopting a gender sensitive lens allows us to design effective interventions that will address these specific barriers.

## How we will implement **gender sensitivity** through our programmes

We will take a gender-responsive approach, mainstreaming gender equality into all our project design. We will tackle the root causes of gender inequalities at the household, community and institutional level, and be led by the lived experience of girls with disabilities. We will disaggregate our data by gender to build an evidence base of best practice, and then amplify the voices of girls and young women with disabilities, equipping them with the skills to challenge harmful gender norms.



## ...and throughout our organisation

We will work with organisations that represent girls and women with disabilities within our network and promote their influence in the disability movement. We will continue to remove any barriers to the full and equal participation of women in our own workforce and support women into more senior roles. We will continue to listen and learn as the conversation around gender develops, ensuring our workplace and the language we use is inclusive. We will also regularly review and update our policies and provide mechanisms for employees and Trustees to raise concerns or suggest improvements.



## 2030 vision

Our plans signify a **sizeable step change** for the organisation over the next strategic period. We are aiming to reach 2030 as a medium sized organisation, with an international profile that allows us to advocate for the inclusion of children with disabilities on the global stage. While ambitious, we believe there is a clear gap for the new network to fill and an opportunity to use the model to expand our impact.

By 2030, the aim is for our network partners to **have their voices heard** and to **influence decision making** on the international stage. By doing so, and by working together, we will ultimately be able to **improve the lives of more children with disabilities across Africa**.

## Our 2030 aims

Our **new strategic direction** is intended to deliver the following aims by 2030.

Operational Aims	Delivery Aims
A well respected and influential African network of organisations working for children with disabilities across at least three regions in Africa.	Disability-inclusive child protection, child safeguarding and access to justice are key international priorities in child rights programming.
A representative body or structure, primarily consisting of network members that meaningfully holds power to make decisions.	Girls and young women with disabilities are better informed on their sexual and reproductive health and rights, and equipped to demand access to inclusive SRHR and WASH.
A strong reputation for expertise in the sector, with more focus on international advocacy and greater influence in decision-making arenas.	Tools for early identification and assessments of child functioning for children with disabilities are widely adopted and integrated into mainstream ECD programming.
A high calibre international staff team, with the technical and operational expertise to deliver sustainable organisational growth.	Children and young people with disabilities have access to targeted interventions that support their transition from primary to secondary school and their transition into employment.
An enhanced international brand, with a greater public profile to generate high levels of unrestricted funds.	Mental health is understood and addressed as a key barrier, for children with disabilities and the existing gap in mental health provision for children with disabilities is closed.
A significant international income portfolio, providing more flexible and targeted funding to members.	Children with disabilities feel represented and heard in global decision-making forums on climate justice and the post-2030 agenda.



---

We would like to thank all our current partners (and new members) for taking us on this journey. The passion and vision you have demonstrated, along with the time you committed, has been a driving force in this process and we look forward to the journey ahead of us.

**With thanks to:**

Action Network for the Disabled  
Child Support Tanzania  
Federation of Disability Organizations in Malawi  
Parents of Disabled Children Association of Malawi  
The Action Foundation  
Uganda Society for Disabled Children  
Uwezo Youth Empowerment  
Zambia Association of Parents for Children with Disabilities  
Zimbabwe Parents of Handicapped Children Association



---

[info@ablechild.org.uk](mailto:info@ablechild.org.uk)  
[ablechild.org.uk](http://ablechild.org.uk)

A registered UK charity (No. 326859) and a company limited by guarantee in England and Wales (No. 01861434).