Harnessing our wisdom to transform children’s lives

Our 2021-25 strategy
Today, we are facing unprecedented global challenges. These are driving greater inequality, and are threatening to reverse all that has been achieved in recent years to reduce poverty.

And yet, against this challenging backdrop, the resilience and responsiveness of local practitioners – like those of us who make up Family – has been truly inspiring. We’ve provided vital lifelines for those who have needed us most. We’ve been able to react quickly to our local communities’ needs, because we are an integral part of those communities. When travel restrictions and lockdowns have made it difficult for international aid to be delivered, those of us who are rooted where we live and work were able to see with our own eyes what our communities needed and to mobilise local resources to help.

This context-based approach to tackling global challenges shows that, together, we can transform the world and achieve a better future. Even in the face of adversity, local practitioners around the world are still striving for ideals such as social justice, equality, sustainability, and non-violence.

That’s why this, our 2021–25 strategy, is a rallying cry. Over the coming years we’ll build momentum behind our movement by engaging and collaborating with far more of these inspiring local practitioners. In doing so, we will be able to collectively make change happen at scale, for all the children and families that need us around the world.

Together, we can make our voices heard. United, we are stronger.

Rekha Nathoo  
CEO, CIindi Network (South Africa)  
Chair of the Board, Family for Every Child
A better future for children and families

We are facing a turbulent time, and the major events unfolding globally are likely to continue. These include the climate crisis, pandemics and economic and social upheaval; all leading to potentially greater conflict, disasters, migration and more people living in extreme poverty.

For children the impact of these macro events is likely to be an increase in children on the move, child labour, child marriage, children dropping out of school and more children in alternative care. This will result in a rise in violence, abuse and neglect and those families that are already vulnerable and marginalised will face disproportionate hardships and rights violations.

Major responses are urgently needed around the world to combat the negative effects of these global challenges on children and families.

There is increasing recognition that local civil society organisations have a rich and unique understanding of our local contexts, the situation for children and families, potential solutions and effective models of interventions. We are a vital resource for families and communities and able to work closely with the most marginalised and vulnerable. We hold crucial knowledge about how to address these inequalities and violations.
As a result, we play a vital role in building a world in which children and families have a right to the support they need to survive and thrive. This world will be characterised by:

**Social justice – addressing inequality:** Democracy and social justice will be the cornerstones of each nation state. Decentralised government and local engagement and participation for all citizens will be key. More equitable distribution of wealth and resources will result in fairer societies. Rather than the digital divide, technology will enable full and equitable participation.

**Environmental sustainability – addressing the climate crisis:** Environmental sustainability will be at the forefront of local, national and international collaboration. Significant steps to reduce carbon emissions will have far-reaching effects across the globe. The benefits will be seen in more biodiverse environments, healthier communities and reduced conflict and disasters.

**Non-violence – addressing violence and discrimination:** Social norms globally will reinforce compassion, mutual respect and dignity for all regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation or ability. Legislation will embody the equality, freedom, dignity, and rights of women, men and children in society and an enabling environment that reinforces non-violence as a way of life.

**Enhancing local civil society:** Local CSOs will become the catalyst and enablers for citizen participation, transparency and accountability. They will work with the government to improve services and provide a robust safety net for all. The localisation agenda will mature and the agenda set by local organisations rather than INGOs. International collaboration will be made up of multiple actors working in horizontal networks of collaboration and action. The evidence base for policy and practice developments will give equal value to lived experience and practitioner understanding alongside rigorous data analysis. Local context will guide legislation, standards, procedures and practice.

**Advancing child wellbeing:** National child protection systems will have transformed into child wellbeing services with resources focused on prevention of violence, abuse and neglect. Struggling families and children and those with complex needs will be supported with relevant and appropriate wrap around services free at point of entry. These services will be available for all families, however they choose to define themselves. As preventative care flourishes, formal alternative care will become the exception and will always include a therapeutic approach for the whole family. Protection measures will be in place for all children, including those outside of families. Children will be at the centre of decisions made about their care and have a wide range of options of support and protection at times of difficulty. Support will be non-discriminatory across gender, religion, caste, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity and ability. Child wellbeing will be integrated into all relevant sectors such as health, education, justice, social protection, mental health and early child development. Every child will have a safe and caring family.
Our vision, mission and goals

Our **vision** is for a world in which children and families everywhere have access to the support they need to survive and thrive.

It’s our **mission** to make that happen for families through research, knowledge exchange and campaigning.

This is aligned to our three organisational **goals**, which remain the same as in our last strategic period. They are:

- Enabling children to grow up in permanent, safe and caring families
- Ensuring a range of high-quality, appropriate temporary alternative care choices for children
- Taking steps to prevent children from having to live outside of any adult care, without the care of families or other carers, and in the interim, protecting these boys and girls
Today’s society is ever more connected and interdependent. In some ways, that opens up amazing new possibilities. For example, we can all work together as a networked collective of local practitioners based all around the world. In the not-too-distant past, that would have been impossible.

On the other hand, events such as the Covid-19 pandemic show us how the risks of living in a globalised world mean that threats can cross borders, and the effects can reach us all.

And although the pandemic has impacted everyone everywhere, the way children and families around the world experienced it has been dramatically different depending on where they live. By way of illustration, those of us working in Delhi have needed to support children living on the street with basic needs like food, whereas in Greece we needed to focus instead on ways to make remote education work for children living in temporary homes. So while children everywhere may benefit from some kind of support for their family, a ‘one-size-fits-all’ global model for that support will never work for everyone. Paradoxically, in the face of global challenges, local insight like ours is essential.

But Covid-19 is far from the only global challenge we are facing. Phenomena as diverse as climate change, global wealth inequality, mass movement of peoples and political power struggles – to name but a few – will all continue to create new difficulties for children and families in ways we can only start to imagine.

This increasingly ‘connected yet different’ context means that our ‘global yet local’ way of working is more relevant than ever. In the face of the challenges that 2021-2025 will surely bring, our collective wisdom as local practitioners will be instrumental in delivering solutions that really work in our communities, and are firmly rooted in local realities.

Our Theory of Change, on the following page, demonstrates the stages we use to make this happen.
As a result of implementing our Theory of Change, we will see that:

- Through research, practice exchange, campaigning and humanitarian response, we will harness our locally-rooted understanding of challenges, highlight taboo and hidden issues and showcase the effectiveness of work being driven by local actors around the world.

- By channelling our knowledge through key thematic focus areas, we will enable it to flow upwards to improve policy and practice. This will be directed nationally, regionally and internationally, so that more children and families have access to the support they need to survive and thrive.

- We will welcome more local practitioners into our global movement through our ‘Changemakers for Children’ online social network. This initiative, created by local practitioners for local practitioners, will bring together thousands of people working on the front line. It will enable connection and knowledge exchange, which, in turn, will form the building blocks for collaboration and collective action.

- We will be recognised as a global movement made up of local practitioners, and the world leader in local knowledge on child wellbeing, under the Family for Every Child banner. We will be seen as an innovative force that is modelling a way for the development sector to truly shift the power to people like us.
Our Strategic Priorities
2021–2025

We have developed five strategic priorities that will guide the work we do together over the coming period. They are:

1. Focusing our action to make the most impact
2. Growing our social movement of local civil society organisations
3. Harnessing the power of digital to achieve transformational change
4. Ensuring financial sustainability without compromise
5. Delivering change by living out our values

The following section explains each of these in more detail, and how we will focus upon them over the next five years.
Strategic priority 1
Focusing our action to make the most impact

We already know how we make change happen. We do this by harnessing our local knowledge through our pathways to impact – practice exchange, research, campaigning, and humanitarian response.

But if we want to make it happen at a bigger scale, we must invest our efforts in thematic areas where we can leverage the most change for children and families.

The strength of our work lies in our local understanding as front-line practitioners, and this informs everything we do. As a result, we will decide on our focus areas together; and then work to make that change happen.

By 2025, we will have:

- Realised our ambition to achieve greater impact through greater focus
- Implemented the Theory of Change across our prioritised themes
- Developed our response in humanitarian contexts

To achieve this we will:

- Work on a maximum of 6 thematic issues at any one time, investing our efforts in areas where we can leverage most change. The impact of the macro events such as Covid-19, inequality and the climate crisis will inform our focus
- Develop a programme portfolio for each thematic area, which will mean we bring all of our resources together so we can achieve change in multiple ways, at different levels, in a highly coordinated approach
- Review our themes on an annual basis, responding to emerging themes identified through both internal and external scans. Over the period we will address a maximum of 10 thematic issues
- Create opportunities for collaboration directly through the Changemakers for Children platform
- Ensure the perspectives of children and families guide our work and the changes we seek
- Strengthen our emergency capability. We will consider how to become an essential national partner in emergencies, providing not just frontline emergency response but emergency preparedness, response, recovery and resilience as local organisations

How we will develop our programme portfolio

Once we have identified our key thematic issues for a period, we will develop a plan – known as our ‘programme portfolio’ – to ensure that we have clear goals and a roadmap for achieving them.

Each programme portfolio will detail how and why we will use our pathways to impact – research, practice exchange, campaigning and humanitarian responses – to reach our objectives for children and families.
Strategic priority 2
Growing our social movement of local civil society organisations (CSOs)

During this strategy period, we will harness the power of networks at an even greater scale to engage far more local practitioners around the world. By doing this, we will help to strengthen the work they do, collaborate on actions for change, and bring them into our social movement of local civil society organisations.

By 2025, we will have:

• Created a social movement of local practitioners and civil society organisations working on the front line with children and families around the world
• Delivered practice exchange, undertaken consultations, generated ideas, and promoted campaigns to a wide range of practitioners, driven largely through our Changemakers for Children platform
• Contributed to inter-agency initiatives and forged strategic partnerships at all levels

To achieve this we will:

• Reach out to a wide range of individuals and organisations to work with us to achieve greater impact, guided by our ‘concentric circles of engagement’ framework (see following page)
• Invest in and further develop the Changemakers for Children digital platform
• Develop new products to enhance user experience and to respond to emerging requirements from the digital community on the platform
• Create and nurture a dedicated area on the platform for those with lived experience and organisations supporting those with lived experience to actively engage in self-advocacy
• Engage in partnerships and inter-agency initiatives to take forward our work, including hosting specific initiatives on the Changemakers for Children platform
• Increase our core membership to 55–60 organisations by inviting organisations to join us who can bring expertise in areas in which we would like to develop our core knowledge further. This will give us a global spread of diverse expertise and critical mass to make changes at regional and international levels
What is the ‘concentric circles of engagement’ framework?

Our ambition is to create a global movement of local practitioners on child wellbeing. We will do this at a sufficient scale to be able to advocate at national, regional and international levels based on a wealth of experience and credible evidence. This movement will highlight emerging practice, tried-and-tested models, hidden issues and demonstrate trends. It will provide a voice for local CSOs on an equal basis with INGOs, bringing their understanding of local context, rights violations and successful approaches to the table.

Our ‘concentric circles of engagement’ model provides a simple framework for organising this movement.

- At its core, our alliance of full Changemaker members will be responsible for setting the overall direction of the movement, by contributing to our governance and leading on the delivery of our impact through working groups and joint actions.
- Following on from here, the wider network of local CSOs with which we have an existing relationship will participate in our research and advocacy, alongside the core members.
- At the next level, other local CSOs will contribute to a broader body of evidence and voice for change by engaging with the Changemakers for Children online community. Here, they will also find our core members and the ‘wider network’ taking part in that community.
- In the outer circle, we will create routes to influence through strategic partners and as part of other networks. This will overlap with the other three circles – core members, the wider network and other local CSOs – who will all also develop routes to influence through their work.
Strategic priority 3
Harnessing the power of digital to increase our effectiveness

We have already seen the impact of putting digital at the forefront of our organisation. A virtual operating model means that the money saved from having a head office is channelled directly to our mission. We have also digitised knowledge sharing across our network thanks to the development of our platform, Changemakers for children.

During this strategy we will use the power of digital to become a social movement, scaling up our programmes to engage thousands of practitioners. We will use digital to create a connected community, building bridges between local organisations across the globe so they can collaborate and advocate for change despite geographic boundaries.

We’ll also invest in technology to improve our relationships with supporters and to sharpen the efficiency of our internal processes.

By 2025, we will have:

- Scaled up our operations to engage thousands of local CSOs
- Developed new digital knowledge ‘products’
- Strengthened our M&E using digital technology
- Recruited and engaged thousands of supporters using digital storytelling to bring donors closer to our work
Unrestricted individual giving will continue to be our main source of income, providing the flexibility needed to work in an innovative way. We will also prioritise growing our income from high value donors, working with a set of key strategic partners who share our vision. We will generate new sources of potential income through an innovation fund and we will develop a fundraising and communications capacity building programme to support the financial sustainability of all our CSOs.

By 2025, we will have:

- Ensured our long term financial sustainability through individual giving
- Developed relationships with High Value donors, generating at least £500k a year
- Created and promoted a brand that communicates simply and effectively Family’s value

In and of itself, the way in which we deliver the strategy will actively contribute to bringing about change. Our model is part of our mission, demonstrating that the development sector can and must shift the power to local CSOs. During this strategy period, we will develop a culture of collective leadership, strengthen our agile working practices and deepen our collaboration to become an even more diverse and inclusive network.

By 2025, we will have:

- Gained recognition as an international alliance which has truly demonstrated our power as local CSOs to transform international collaboration and change
- Become a vibrant virtual organisation that has embedded agile working, with a comprehensive results framework able to demonstrate the impact of the model
- Deepened our culture of participation and inclusion through greater intercultural competencies and collective leadership
Making it happen

In bringing this strategy to life, we will make an even bigger difference to children and families around the world. This means that, by 2025, more children and families will have access to the support they need to survive and thrive, all underpinned by change built on local realities.

However you are involved in our work, you can make a difference.

For Changemaker organisations, this means developing action plans that align with each of our 5 strategic priorities, with the help of our Secretariat.

For our Secretariat, this will involve collaborating on team action plans that can support our strategic priorities, and partnering with member organisations so they have what they need from us to deliver on theirs.

For donors, we will be outlining our strategy and collaboratively exploring areas of shared interest that will make the biggest difference.

If you have any questions on our strategy, or suggestions on how you might like to get involved, please contact supportercare@familyforeverychild.org. We would be delighted to hear about your plans and ideas.
Acknowledgements

This report was written and designed by HopeWorks on behalf of Family for Every Child.

In some occasions, stock photography has been used so as to comply with photography consent requirements.