



**AbleChildAfrica**  
Working with disabled children and young people in Africa

# Strategic Plan

2017-2022





Emmanuel was 11 years old when he fell sick in 1993 with suspected tuberculosis of the bone. With reduced mobility he was confined to his bed and often left alone. His uncle bought him a radio to keep him entertained on his long days at home and it was on this radio that Emmanuel first heard of AbleChildAfrica (then called USDC). Immediately inspired, Emmanuel wrote a letter explaining his situation and how a mobility aid could help him to participate in normal daily tasks again, at home and in the community. Most importantly, he wanted to return to school. After a home visit, Emmanuel received a tricycle and was provided with physiotherapy to help rebuild his muscle strength. He re-enrolled in school and after continued physiotherapy, regained sensation in his legs and was able to walk again for the first time in more than 3 years. Emmanuel continued to excel in class and completed his secondary education, going on to gain a teaching qualification.

AbleChildAfrica was reunited with Emmanuel over 20 years later when we discovered him teaching at one of the schools in Northern Uganda that AbleChildAfrica was working with to ensure children with disabilities receive a quality inclusive education. He told us "I am teaching children who were my age when I left school due to my impairment. It is an inspiration to see children with disabilities excelling in the classroom and not being told they cannot go to school because they have a disability". We were thrilled to hear that Emmanuel has thrived as a result of the early opportunities we were able to provide to him and excited that he continues to be part of the incredible work that AbleChildAfrica is doing all these years later.

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The names and corresponding pictures of the children in this document have been changed to protect their identity and ensure the safety of all children involved. All images are reproduced with permission.



# WHO WE ARE

## About Us

AbleChildAfrica is a UK based charity\* working with and alongside partner organisations in Africa to achieve equal rights for children with disabilities and their families. We are the UK's leading NGO that focuses exclusively on children with disabilities in Africa. The children we work with are some of the world's most vulnerable.

AbleChildAfrica was founded in 1984 as the Uganda Society for Disabled Children (USDC) to support children injured by the Ugandan Civil War in the 1970s and 1980s. In 2007, USDC in the UK became AbleChildAfrica and began supporting work with children with disabilities in other countries and with additional partners. Today, we work with five long-term partner organisations across Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and Rwanda.

AbleChildAfrica is at an important stage of our organisational development. We have 33 years of experience in working with and for children with disabilities in Africa to draw upon. Conversely, our expansion to AbleChildAfrica, and the development of our work outside Uganda, is 10 years old. Our last strategic plan focused on further establishing ourselves, our partnerships and our ways of working, within this increased mandate. We are proud to have met, and in many cases surpassed, the majority of our goals outlined in the last strategic plan (see page 8).

“ The mission of AbleChildAfrica speaks to my soul, and I feel that the mission statement echoes my life mission... This gives strength to the voice within me, and in a couple of minutes I find myself applying to serve on the AbleChildAfrica Youth Council. The rest is history. ” Youth Council member

## Vision

A world in which all children with disabilities are fully included as equal members of society and able to achieve their full potential.

## Mission

To promote the realisation of equal rights for children with disabilities and their families in Africa and facilitate their meaningful inclusion in all aspects of life.

## Values

We are committed to:

- A rights based approach to development
- The social model of disability
- The empowerment of children with disabilities and their families
- African led development
- The sharing of knowledge, learning and resources with like-minded organisations

\*Under UK law AbleChildAfrica is registered as a "charity"; this term defines our legal status and is not intended as a description of our approach or practice



## Why we Exist

People with disabilities represent the world's largest minority and children with disabilities are some of the most disadvantaged in the world. AbleChildAfrica exists to redress this imbalance.

We know the need is great. One billion people, that's roughly 15% of the world's population, or 1 in 7 people, live with a disability<sup>1</sup>. Of those, over 80% live in poverty, which is both a cause and consequence of disability and contributes to even further disadvantage. Despite the evident need, less than 1% of aid funding is targeted towards people with disabilities.

Little reliable data exists on the prevalence of childhood disability, although estimates suggest that there are at least 93 million children with disabilities in the world<sup>2</sup>, of which more than 52 million live in Africa<sup>3</sup>. Despite rights enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD), the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), children with disabilities in Africa remain disproportionately marginalised from realising these rights.

A significant proportion of children with disabilities are denied access to basic services such as education, health care or social inclusion. As a result, under age five mortality for children with disabilities is as high as 80%<sup>4</sup>. In education, children with disabilities are far less likely to go to school, or to stay in school once they get there. Estimates show up to 98% of children with disabilities in Africa never attend formal schooling and 90% never receive an education of any kind<sup>5</sup>.

Children with disabilities are also disproportionately exposed to violence, exploitation and abuse, and their rights and needs are systematically overlooked. Research indicates that violence against children with disabilities occurs at least 1.7 times more often than for their peers without disabilities, and that girls with disabilities are 3 times more likely to experience sexual abuse than those without<sup>6</sup>.

The reasons for the systematic disadvantage of children with disabilities are complex and dynamic. One of greatest barriers to their inclusion however, includes the stigma, prejudice, and fear collectively perpetuated by a lack of information and capacity building of local actors working in the disability sector. This is too often further exasperated by compounding barriers of discrimination based on gender, ethnicity or economic background. The exclusion and invisibility of children with disabilities can render them uniquely vulnerable.

However, recent international commitments increasingly put people, and specifically children, with disabilities at the forefront of international development agendas. The inclusion of disability into the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for the first time represents a watershed opportunity to achieve tangible results with global reach.

Despite this increased commitment, without implementation, international promises may go undelivered. AbleChildAfrica will continue to champion and address the rights and needs of children with disabilities; we aim to ensure they are fully included as equal members of society. This strategy outlines our approach to doing so.





The youngest of six children, Edith was five years old when suddenly, overnight, she lost her sight: "I remember it was in the night. I was seeing, I was not seeing. I was seeing, I was not seeing. I was in bed by myself. Nobody came." Her mother told us "she was complaining of a headache and then one day she woke up not seeing. After a year she started getting convulsions, high fever and then she had a stroke and was paralysed. It hit Edith hard. It took her 6 months to speak again."

Now ten years old and a student at our partner school, Edith comes home from school and eagerly tells her parents about her day. She is provided with transport to and from her physiotherapy appointments and whilst Edith is at school her mother has time to work and earn an income for their family. Her mother tells us "Edith is heavy, because of her age and weight, so going to physiotherapy at the hospital was hard. We are thankful for projects like these that support parents."

With the help of our programme that empowers parents of children with disabilities, Edith's mother is now a strong advocate for her daughter and other families in similar positions. "We call upon the government to support, and even to expand, schools that provide for children with disabilities; to increase the [amount of] physiotherapy equipment and to provide support for parents like us... We must remember our work as parents is never done."

# OUR TRACK RECORD

AbleChildAfrica remains focused exclusively on improving the lives of children with disabilities and their families in Africa. Over the last 33 years, we have established ourselves as a leader in the sector by:

- Delivering Africa-led, effective and sustainable services for children with disabilities whilst simultaneously building the capacity of local actors working in the disability sector.
- Forging strong partnerships and prioritising our African-led approach. Establishing and working to maintain strong and effective partnerships improves the quality of our programmatic and advocacy work and ultimately our ability to improve the lives of children with disabilities and their families.
- Utilising international frameworks to advocate for the active participation of children and youth with disabilities in policy in the UK and internationally. Standing alongside our partners locally to hold governments to account to their stated obligations.
- Translating our values into multi-faceted programming that combines the social model of disability with twin-track, rights-based and child-led approaches to identify and address the complex and compounding barriers children with disabilities face. The combination of these approaches, described in detail below, has been consistently praised by our donors for its high quality sustainable results, whilst offering value for money.
- Continually breaking new ground with our innovations such as our child and disability inclusive monitoring, evaluation and learning systems. We intend to continue to advance and share these with like-minded organisations in the sector.

- Putting children and young people at the heart of our work and listening to their voices, not only on the ground but also within our own programmes and governance systems, such as through our Youth Council. In programming, we use a peer-to-peer methodology that empowers children with disabilities to understand and demand their own rights. We are also increasingly being recognised for our leadership on disability inclusive safeguarding practices and the design of pioneering tools and processes for the meaningful protection of children with disabilities.

We are proud of what we have accomplished during our last strategic period, reaching and in many cases exceeding, our ambitions. We set out our results against plans more specifically below. Learning from this analysis informs the current strategy and our plans going forward.

**“AbleChildAfrica implements through carefully-chosen local partners, rather than directly. I am impressed with the quality of its programming; its monitoring and oversight; and the effort it invests in capacity-building. Additionally, it is quite small and nimble, and able to respond to changing circumstances or take advantage of new opportunities.”**

Government Donor

What we accomplished from our last strategy 2013-2016

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES 2013-2016	THE PLAN	WHAT WE DID	WHAT WE LEARNED
<p>Support African-led organisations to help children with disabilities and their families realise their full potential.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to support existing partners with tailored capacity building in key organisational development areas such as good governance, financial management, leadership skills, sustainable fundraising and monitoring &amp; evaluation.</li> <li>Explore opportunities for additional long-term partnerships or time-bound project work with African-led organisations.</li> <li>Provide access to funding opportunities and broker financial support.</li> <li>Facilitate networking between our partners and other relevant local and international organisations.</li> <li>Support collaborative skill sharing across our network of partners, including facilitating a biennial partner's meeting.</li> <li>Support African-led organisations to influence policy, legislation and practice at their national level.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expanded our reach to Rwanda and formed a new partnership with UWEZO Youth Empowerment.</li> <li>Delivered an increasingly diverse profile of projects for children with disabilities.</li> <li>Developed and replicated a proven inclusive education methodology across East Africa.</li> <li>Supported partners in Tanzania and Uganda to advocate for national inclusive education policies.</li> <li>Diversified our portfolio of grant donors; established strong relationships with donors through a track record of success, compliance and quality.</li> <li>With our partners, developed a bespoke organisational health check-our Partnership Impact Tool-and piloted this tool with our five partners.</li> <li>Provided individualised organisational development support to our African partner organisations; facilitated reciprocal learning exchanges to advance skill and knowledge sharing across our partnership network.</li> <li>Developed detailed and robust monitoring, evaluation and learning (MEL) systems to capture data and evidence of 'what works' including designing child-focused disability inclusive data collection tools.</li> </ul>	<p>Over the last period we have learned that it is important for us to distinguish AbleChildAfrica's capacity building support to our network of partners, from the direct services and project work we deliver alongside them. Going forward we have split this into two distinct strategic objectives (Objectives 1 &amp; 2), which we feel better recognises the centrality of our capacity building work to the quality and sustainability of the projects we deliver together. We will also be better able to articulate, plan for and measure our impact across two distinct objectives</p>
<p>Increase understanding of childhood disability in Africa.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to work with and alongside our current partners to raise awareness of childhood disability locally and to combat stigma and disabling beliefs, attitudes and practice.</li> <li>Influence and support larger children's organisations to mainstream disability into their existing programmes and practice.</li> <li>Develop and promote resources, including trainings and toolkits, on mainstreaming issues of childhood disability and child participation into organisational practice.</li> <li>Raise the profile of children with disabilities in Africa amongst key UK audiences.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Raised the profile of children with disabilities in Africa; advocated for youth involvement amongst key UK audiences.</li> <li>Delivered disability mainstreaming training for UK based NGOs seeking to include children with disabilities in their work.</li> <li>Delivered disability inclusive child protection and safeguarding training for UK based NGOs</li> <li>Developed a disability mainstreaming 'checklist' to be shared with other organisations to improve inclusion.</li> <li>Delivered inclusive education training to members of the Bond Disability and Development Group in the UK.</li> <li>Engaged with international awareness raising campaigns, particularly on the Day of the African Child and The International Day for Persons with Disabilities.</li> <li>Developed our online and social media presence to raise awareness of AbleChildAfrica and our work.</li> <li>Nominated and supported the appointment of our Youth Ambassador as a UN Young Leader for the Sustainable Development Goals. As one of only 17 Young Leaders selected, and the only advocate with a disability themselves.</li> </ul>	<p>Conversely, we found it difficult to separate or attribute the independence of AbleChildAfrica's advocacy and influencing work from that delivered alongside our partners in Africa. Going forward, we have combined these two objectives into one (Objective 3) and have underpinned this with a newly developed Advocacy Strategy. This Advocacy Strategy allows us to better focus our ambitions and therefore better measure our results and impact in influencing.</p>
<p>Effect positive changes in international law and policy that impact upon children with disabilities in Africa.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to work with and alongside our current partners to advocate for national or regional policy change and to hold Governments to account for their current stated obligations.</li> <li>Actively collaborate with relevant networks and consortia to advance the rights of children with disabilities in Africa.</li> <li>Form a meaningful &amp; inclusive young persons advisory panel.</li> <li>Engage with and influence discussions on the Beyond 2015 agenda, ensuring that issues affecting children with disabilities and their families are considered and included when the next set of international development priorities are agreed.</li> <li>Influence and support donors fund work that benefits children with disabilities and their families to mainstream disability.</li> <li>Lobby the UK government to fulfil their obligations to children with disabilities in Africa.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Collaborated with select networks and consortia including the Bond's Disability and Development and Child Rights groups, the International Disability and Development Consortia and Comic Relief's 'All in All Learning' grantee consortium</li> <li>Established our UK Youth Council to give a voice to youth with disabilities internally and across our programmatic and advocacy work.</li> <li>Established our African Advisory Council to give a voice to those living with, or impacted by, disability in Africa internally and across our programmatic and advocacy work.</li> <li>Lobbied for the inclusion of disability into the SDGs, provided evidence for the UK Government's 'Enquiry on Disability and Development' and supported the development and review of DFID's Disability Framework.</li> <li>Advocated to and with partners for use of the Washington Group Questions for disability data identification.</li> <li>Consulted by two of the largest UK grant donors on their new disability inclusive funding strategies and grant streams.</li> <li>Supported our partners in Tanzania and Uganda to draft national inclusive education policies, modify national examinations and develop more inclusive teacher training curriculums</li> </ul>	<p>Finally, we also learned that the quality and sustainability of AbleChildAfrica's work is necessarily dependant on robust back end operations. We therefore introduce a new 4th objective, setting out the internal milestones and organisational development we seek to achieve for AbleChildAfrica over the next strategic period.</p>



# WHERE WE ARE GOING

Our current strategy (2017-2022) seeks only to refresh and perhaps better articulate an extension of our previous strategy. Over the next period, we will continue to establish AbleChildAfrica as a leader in the field, both by striving to do what we already do well even better and by championing internal organisational development to have an even greater impact on the fulfilment of rights for children with disabilities in Africa.

**“ I choose [to support] AbleChildAfrica because it has an inclusive ethos. Their aim is to enable children to become valued members of their homes and communities. AbleChildAfrica are continually pushing these boundaries and dispelling myths by replacing them with facts ”**

Evelyn Glennie, Patron

Over the next five years, we will continue to strengthen our network of partners, working together to directly impact the lives of children with disabilities and their families. We commit to further strengthening the capacity of our partners, whilst also learning reciprocally from them. We aim to be a recognised hub for a network of African-led organisations that share resources and expertise to advance the rights of children with disabilities. We also aspire to be increasingly called upon to lend our voice, and the voice of our partners, to key regional and international policy debates as well as to provide resources, training and strategic guidance to organisations and donors seeking to include children with disabilities in their programmes. We aim to facilitate increasing opportunities for children with disabilities to participate in decisions and programmes that affect them, and to live ever-safer lives where they are protected from neglect, harm and abuse.



Frederick was born with shortened lower limbs, meaning that he and his family soon faced discrimination from neighbours, who told his parents that he should be sent to live in the bush alone. Luckily for Frederick, his parents refused to feel ashamed of their son and pushed for him to go to school. His father carried him on his back to and from school every day, meaning that Théogène was able to access his education, pass his primary grades and receive a Government scholarship to attend secondary school.

In 2016, Frederick became one of AbleChildAfrica's youth disability mentors as part of a 2-year mentoring programme in Rwanda supporting children with disabilities. In that role he provided 1:1 tailored support to a boy called Emmanuel. Emmanuel spent his first three weeks as a child on life support due to oxygen deprivation, which caused damage to his brain. Once his parents realised the severity of his disability, Emmanuel was abandoned in the street. Frederick found Emmanuel homeless.

Today, Frederick and his wife help Emmanuel with his homework and life skills development. Our mentoring programme allows Frederick to get support and advice from other youth disability mentors on how best to care for Emmanuel. Through our mentoring project, Frederick believes he has gained the skills required to provide Emmanuel with the full care and support that is needed for him to succeed at school and become independent in his adult life.

# HOW WE WORK

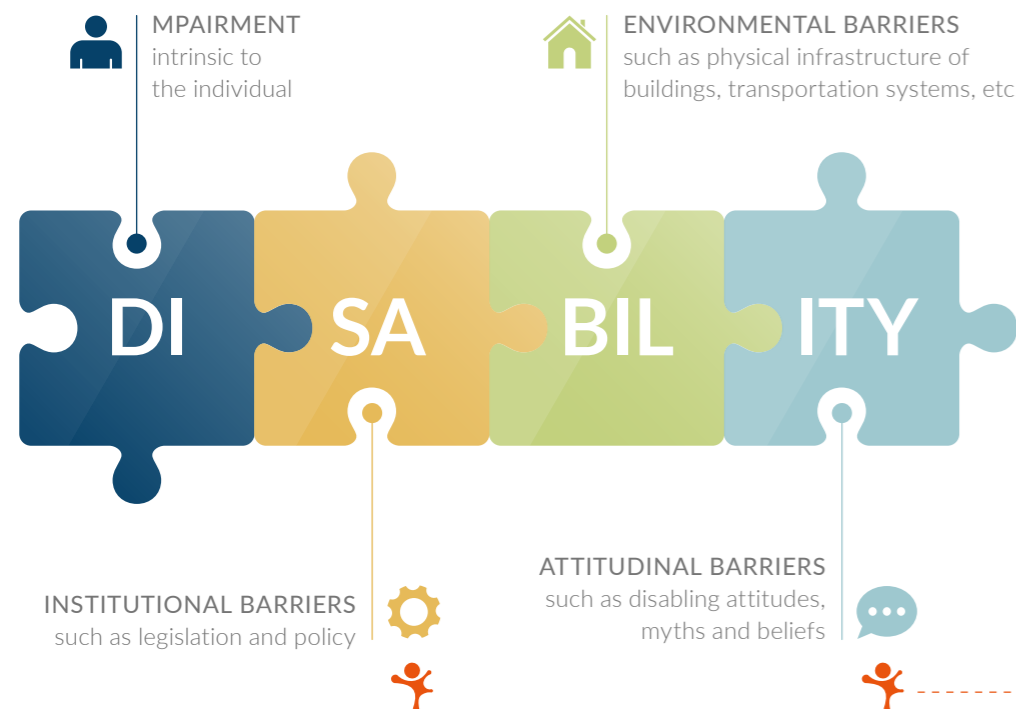
AbleChildAfrica is proud that our approaches are rooted in our values. We believe it is the combination of these approaches that makes AbleChildAfrica both unique and impactful.

## Social Model of Disability

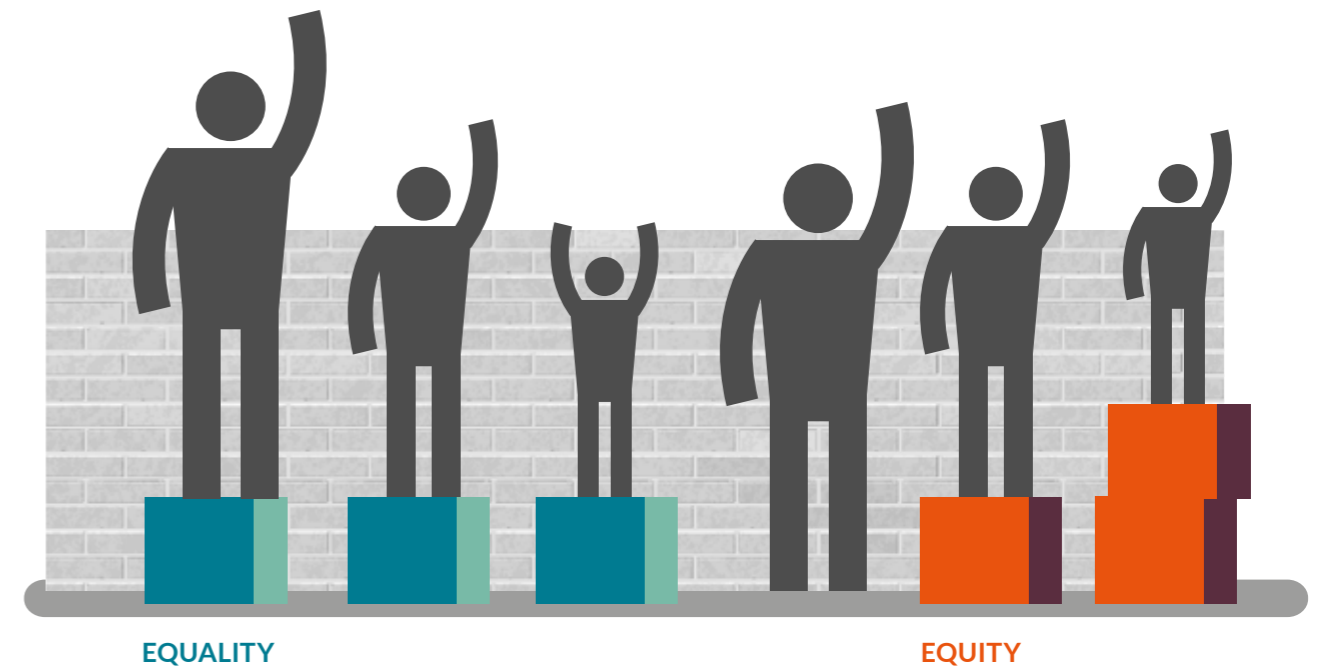
AbleChildAfrica adopts the social model of disability, which means we believe disability arises when an individual's impairment is compounded by societal barriers that prohibit that individual from fully participating in society. The social model of disability acknowledges that disability is a social construct that arises through discrimination and oppression. It acknowledges that change is needed across the society, not within an individual.

Barriers to full inclusion typically fall into three main categories: environmental, institutional and attitudinal. Each of these barriers can interact in any combination, and with an individual's impairment, to prevent them from participating equally in everyday activities alongside their families and peers.

By adopting the social model AbleChildAfrica's approach then focuses on removing barriers that restrict life choices for children and youth with disabilities and their families. We focus on driving change in society rather than within an individual.



AbleChildAfrica works alongside our partners to address all aspects of disability on the ground in Africa. Independently, we also contribute to breaking down institutional and attitudinal barriers on a global stage through our influencing work.



## Rights Based Approach

All of AbleChildAfrica's work is embedded in a human and disability rights-based approach, which means we believe that people with disabilities are first and foremost, people, with equal human rights. We are guided by the principle that all children and youth should be able to participate in every sphere of life and society on an equitable basis regardless of their abilities.

## Twin Track Approach

AbleChildAfrica adopts a 'twin track approach' to disability-inclusive programming for children with disabilities. This means we believe that inclusion is most effective when efforts are made to actively mainstream disability across programmes and policies as a cross cutting priority whilst also supporting interventions that focus on the specific needs of children with disability.

This approach recognises that children with disabilities are intrinsically disadvantaged and ensuring their full inclusion requires both mainstream and targeted interventions. Following a twin-track approach allows us to focus on equity of opportunity for children with disabilities over equality.

## Child & Youth-Led Approach

AbleChildAfrica believes that young people are best placed to make decisions that will impact their own lives. Historically, children with disabilities have too often been defined or judged by what they lack rather than by what they can contribute. Committing to a child or youth-led approach means more than including or consulting young people in our work. It means we find effective and meaningful ways to empower children and youth with disabilities to participate and lead in the design, delivery and monitoring of our programmatic work, and we encourage our partners to do the same.

\*Available as a separate document in print and on our website.

## Our Partnership Approach

This strategy reaffirms our previous strategic commitment to working with and alongside partner organisations in Africa to achieve our mission. Our values and Theory of Change are firmly grounded in a partnership approach; we remain committed to local ownership and we believe we achieve the greatest impact and sustainability by working with and through our partners.

AbleChildAfrica will partner with organisations where we can add value and make a difference. To us that means both making a difference to the lives of children with disabilities as well as making a difference to the partner organisation itself. Learning from our last strategic plan (2013-2016) has led us to better articulate our contribution to these as distinct areas. As a result, we have split our work on partnership into two separate strategic objectives (1 & 2) to better plan for, and measure progress towards, these two areas independently.

We believe a successful partnership is one that both achieves the common aim intended, whilst simultaneously being of mutual benefit and enjoyment to both parties. AbleChildAfrica's Partnership Model\* outlines our approach in more detail and is informed by extensive consultation with our current partners as well as examination of other models in the sector. Our Partnership Model is intended to be brave, to do things differently, to level, as far as possible, power dynamics that have the potential to be unequal and most importantly, to invite and encourage our partners to do the same.



# OUR STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES

## Objective 1

In partnership with African-led organisations, ensure children with disabilities and their families access services that enable them to realise their full potential.

### What we Know

Around the world, children and youth with disabilities continue to be disproportionately marginalised and systematically left behind. Yet we know that the benefits of investing in children with disabilities and their families can be transformational, both for themselves and for societies. We know that when they are provided with opportunities to do so, children and youth with disabilities are able to fulfil their full potential and we know this has multiplier effects for and achieving the Global Goals. We also know that the earlier in life we reach children with disabilities, the greater the impact we have on transforming their life chances.

“ To tell you the truth my daughter is wise... I dream that she studies and is successful... When she’s at school I’m in a position to sell vegetables at the market, it gives me the time to fend for the family... [otherwise] I think she would just stay at home because I see nowhere else to take her ”

Parent

### What we Believe

We believe quality and success depends on being-grounded in the local context. Attitudes and beliefs surrounding childhood disability, as well as local policies, programmes and resources, differ across each country we work in. This is one reason why we support African-led development, work alongside local organisations and do not have our own staff or offices in Africa. We are firmly committed to local ownership and to African-led solutions to local challenges and each of our partners remain firmly in charge of their own strategy and activities.

We believe the barriers to inclusion for children with disabilities are dynamic and complex; as such we believe in a multi-faceted holistic approach. Our projects are designed to address the different layers of change needed concurrently, as defined by the social model. We also believe the quality and sustainability of our projects is improved when they build local capacity such that Governments, NGOs and individuals are better placed to take charge of their own initiatives and lives. We also believe that children and youth with disabilities have a right to be included in decisions that affect them and that children and families can be powerful agents of change when given the opportunity.



“ AbleChildAfrica is not an NGO coming in and doing something for us. It is a partnership, working with us. We have been involved from the start, the planning and the implementation and we will still be there when the project withdraws. ”

Local Government Official

### What we Do

AbleChildAfrica will continue working with and alongside local partner organisations in Africa, working together to create sustainable change to improve the lives of children with disabilities and their families. Together, we will continue to provide direct services for children with disabilities and their families.

Whilst local needs and priorities will be led by our partner organisations on the ground, we will remain focused on thematic areas where the rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities overlap. Key priority areas agreed with our partners include:

- Inclusive education
- Health services
- Poverty reduction
- Social inclusion
- Child & youth participation
- Safeguarding of children with disabilities
- Inclusive play & sport
- Livelihoods
- Breaking down disabling beliefs, attitudes and practices

Where resources and capacity allow, we will continue to explore opportunities for additional long-term partnerships or time-bound project work with African-led organisations. However, we will only expand our reach where we are satisfied we have sufficient and sustainable resources, both human and financial, to do so. We also seek to increasingly collaborate with both disability specialist and mainstream childhood international NGOs where doing so can increase our impact, reach, scale or efficiency.





Mawuli's parents assumed he'd never be able to get an education because he was unable to walk. He spent the first eight years of his life at home until an AbleChildAfrica project, delivered with one of our Ugandan partner organisations, identified he was out of school. A child-led approach to a community survey resulted in other school children reporting to their teachers that Mawuli wasn't enrolled in school. Mawuli's parents worried that he would get bullied by other children and that he wouldn't be able to use the toilet because he would have to crawl on the floor. AbleChildAfrica supported Mawuli through the provision of a wheelchair, the building of an accessible toilet and the organisation of workshops to educate other children about disability, providing Mawuli's parents with the reassurance they needed to enrol him into school.

Today, Mawuli is pushed to school by his friends in his wheelchair. Other children have also come up with adapted football games to ensure he's never left out. The teachers have been amazed by the children's ability to include Mawuli in lessons, giving him extra support when he needs it. Mawuli just turned nine years old. He values his education and he's happy to be there, learning with his friends and as part of his wider community.

## OBJECTIVE 2

Build the capacity of a network of African-led disability organisations, both individually and collectively, to maximise the impact and sustainability of their work.

### What we Know

AbleChildAfrica works with grassroots local African-led organisations which exist to improve the lives of children with disabilities. These organisations are typically founded by individuals with disabilities, or their close relations, in response to a dearth of existing services suited to their needs. Experience has shown us that an initial focus on service provision can be hindered by a need to professionalise their organisation as it develops. We also know that the needs of all organisations, including AbleChildAfrica, change throughout that organisation's lifespan and are responsive to the external environment.

### What we Believe

We believe that we achieve greater impact by supporting a few partners intensively then by supporting many partners less well. We also believe the quality of the services offered for children with disabilities and their families is highest when managed by well-run efficient organisations and that AbleChildAfrica has a role to play in supporting this.

### What we Do

Over this strategic period, AbleChildAfrica will continue to support the organisational development of partners, both individually and as a network, as well as broker financial support.

Importantly, AbleChildAfrica will facilitate networking and collaborative skill sharing across our partners and other relevant local and international organisations. Our network of partners will support one another, utilising the relative strengths and weaknesses of each member, to share knowledge and strengthen each other. As a full and active member of this network, AbleChildAfrica will reciprocally learn from our partners as well, to further build our own capacity.

Whilst we have always believed capacity building across our network of partners is key to AbleChildAfrica's success and quality in service delivery, we aim to increasingly measure this causality over the current strategic period. Our Partnership Impact Tool\*, developed over the last strategic period with the full participation of our partners, will allow us to better measure, learn from and articulate the impact we have on the development of our partner organisations themselves. This tool provides a pathway to furthering impactful and measurable working relationships with our partners; it offers the opportunity to identify relative internal strengths and weaknesses and then identify priority 'areas of focus' for development across five key organisational health domains:

- Governance
- Finance
- Fundraising
- Programmes
- Advocacy

A sixth domain entitled 'working in partnership' allows both partners to assess, openly discuss and continually strengthen the overall health and functioning of the partnership. Using this tool, AbleChildAfrica will work together with each of our partner organisations to identify specific priority areas of capacity building support, identify 'areas of focus', and measure annual progress towards achieving agreed targets.

“ My favourite memory working with AbleChildAfrica was in the early years of our partnership developing [our] strategic plan. This has helped us to target the resources and strategic partnerships we need to achieve our objectives and grow as an organisation. ”

Director of AbleChildAfrica partner organisation

\*Available as a separate document in print and on our website.



### OBJECTIVE 3

Effect positive changes in the realisation of the rights of children with disabilities through strengthened policies, improved budgeting and expanded opportunities for child and youth participation.

#### What we Know

We know that international commitment to achieving disability rights has never been higher. Therefore the need to hold actors to their stated commitments has never been greater.

We know that countries in sub-Saharan Africa are already furthest off track in achieving the Global Goals and that they fall furthest behind targets, or lack the data to measure, over 90% of child-related SDG indicators<sup>7</sup>. We know that without concerted efforts, international commitments to disability and development will similarly be undermined by a lack of data.

#### What we Believe

We believe AbleChildAfrica has a responsibility to share learning amassed over 33 years of working in the disability and development sector.

We believe we can have an increased impact by leveraging the collective voices and resources of like-minded organisations. This is why we collaborate with our partners and other relevant organisations, network and consortia. We believe in facilitating opportunities for children with disabilities and their families to speak for themselves whenever possible, and in representing those voices to the best of our ability at all other times.

We also believe our approaches offer value for money to our donors. By training and influencing larger organisations with a wider reach to mainstream disability across their projects, we offer a cost-effective and efficient way of reaching larger numbers of children and families.

“ What the world forgets is that it needs organisations like AbleChildAfrica to make the Sustainable Development Goals happen. They cannot do that without [our] support. I think of all the children with disabilities in Africa and their unfulfilled dreams ”

Anne Wafula Strike, Patron

#### What we Do

We aim to extend our influence and take an increasingly strategic approach towards our advocacy and influencing work, moving away from ad hoc or reactive approaches. To this end, we have developed a comprehensive Advocacy Plan\* that seeks to position AbleChildAfrica as a catalyst for change and ensure that advocacy is mainstreamed throughout our programmatic work. This plan attempts to balance our ambition with the realities of a resource constrained external environment and therefore concentrates on three priority intervention areas:

- Inclusive education
- Child protection
- Participation of children with disabilities in decisions that affect them.

We will continue to work with and alongside our current partners to raise awareness of childhood disability locally and to combat stigma and disabling beliefs, attitudes and practice. We will stand alongside them to advocate for national or regional policy change and to hold their Governments to account for their stated obligations. We will also strengthen our partners to support policy implementation, and to collaborate with relevant actors to ensure children with disabilities are not left behind.

Internationally, we will collaborate with networks and consortia to advance the rights of children with disabilities in Africa. In particular, we will continue to actively participate in relevant task groups within BOND (network of UK NGOs) and the International Disability and Development Consortium (IDDC). We will ensure our advocacy efforts are both informed by, and inclusive of, young people with disabilities, including our own Youth Council.

Finally, we also aim to scale up our training and consultancy services in order to both influence and support children's organisations, donors and Governments to mainstream disability into their existing programmes and practice. We will develop and promote resources, such as trainings and toolkits, on our areas of expertise, including mainstreaming issues of childhood disability and child participation into organisational practice and the protection and safeguarding of children with disabilities.



### OBJECTIVE 4

Continually advance AbleChildAfrica to ensure we stay fit for purpose and accountable to the children, families, donors and organisations we work with.

#### What we Know

AbleChildAfrica has grown significantly over our previous strategic period, both in size and complexity. We know this has coincided with large changes in the external environment, both in UK charity regulation and on a global scale. In 2016 alone, we saw the introduction of the Charities Protection and Social Investment Act 2016, the publication of a revised Charity Governance Code, and the introduction of a new Fundraising Regulator and Fundraising Preference Service; each of which brought about significant change to the regulation of charities. Further regulatory changes remain on the horizon whilst, Brexit and the global political environment simultaneously create a level of uncertainty. Although AbleChildAfrica is always alert and responsive to our responsibilities, we are acutely aware of ever shifting goalposts in a resource-constrained environment.

#### What we Believe

We believe in living our values at all times, setting an example with our actions and remaining transparent and accountable to the children, families, organisations and donors we work with.

We believe that investing in internal systems, infrastructure and our staffing is necessary to ensure safe, effective and impactful delivery of our work. We also believe in being transparent with our donors about how we spend their funds and about our future needs.

#### What we Do

AbleChildAfrica takes our obligation to continually advance our internal operations seriously. We will hold ourselves to the same standards we set for our partners and as such will use our Partnership Impact Tool to assess ourselves and set priority targets around Trustee mandated 'areas of focus'.

Whilst targets will be agreed annually, key ongoing commitments include:

- **Safeguarding:** we reaffirm here our commitment to ensure our staff and the activities we deliver do no harm.
- **Sustainability:** we will strive to ensure our funding comes from increasingly diverse and sustainable sources and that those sources represent a balance of restricted and flexible funds.
- **Staffing:** we will invest in the staff structure needed to deliver our strategic objectives and commit to their wellbeing.
- **Learning:** we will further our monitoring, evaluation and learning approaches as per the framework outlined below.

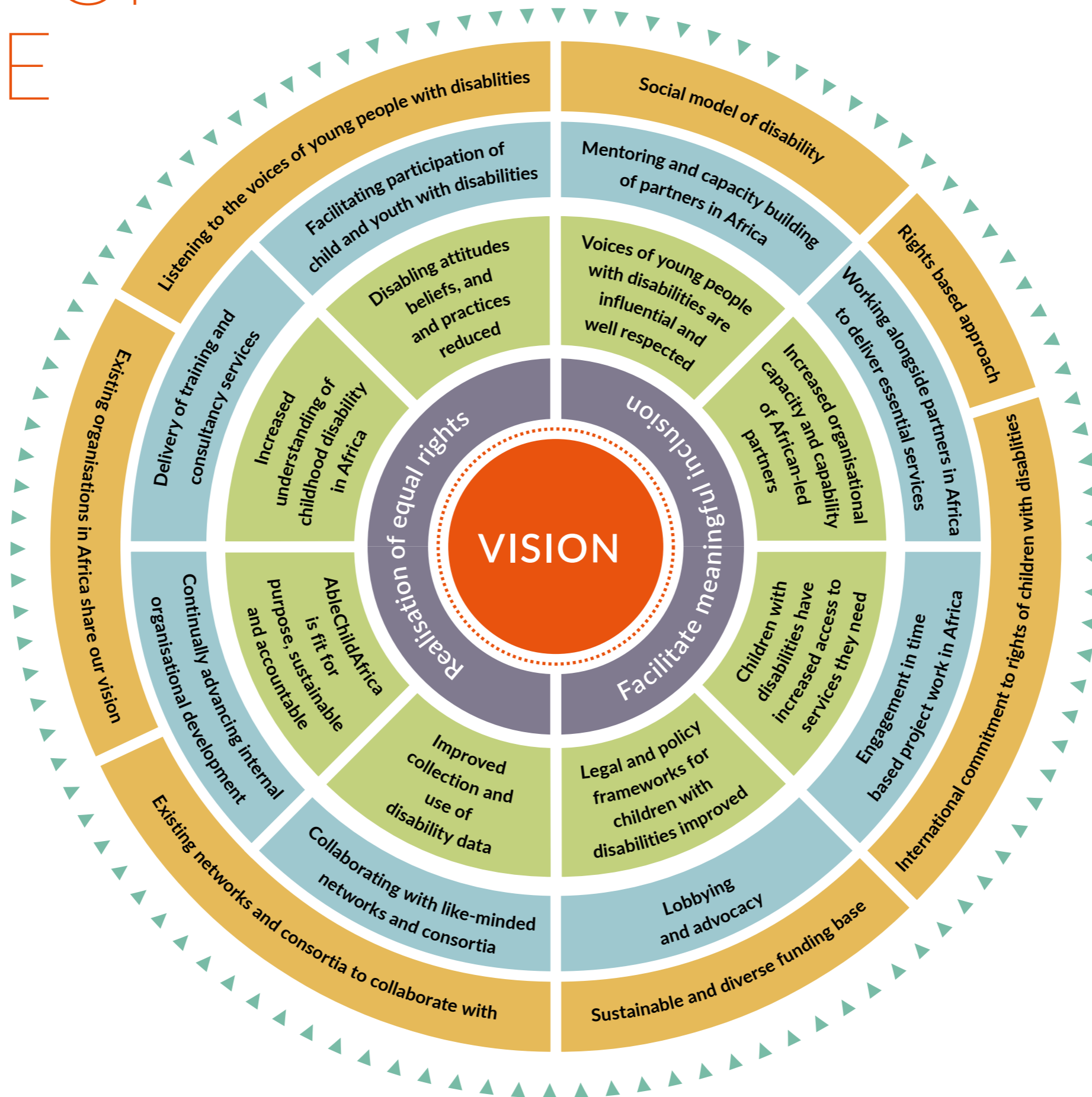
\*Available as a separate document in print and on our website.



# THEORY OF CHANGE

Our Theory of Change (ToC) clearly sets out the change we want to see in the world, how we go about effecting this change and the assumptions or evidence behind our chosen strategies. Our ToC also offers a visual representation of our strategy.

Our 'wheel of change' is a visual representation of our belief that improving the lives of children with disabilities is a complex cyclical process whereby each and every activity we engage in contributes to every result we aim to achieve, albeit some more directly than others. We also believe that there are certain necessary preconditions for success and that those encompass all of our work. Finally, we believe there is a feedback loop within our strategy such that, the more progress we make towards our strategic objectives, the higher the likelihood that the pre-conditions for success will be met.



- VISION
- MISSION
- OUTCOMES
- ACTIVITIES
- PRE-CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS
- ⋯ LINE OF ACCOUNTABILITY

Our line of accountability falls between our mission and our vision. We actively work to achieve our mission; this is the benchmark we use to measure our progress and impact. Conversely, our aim is to contribute to our vision; we believe this is the shared responsibility of all individuals and organisations.

# MEASURING OUR IMPACT

We are dedicated to the principles of accountability, transparency and to monitoring our own impact and effectiveness.

Our Monitoring Framework is mapped to our Theory of Change and is focused on trying to measure, as accurately and efficiently as possible, progress towards achieving the changes we set out to effect.

While we do aim to track the quantitative elements of our work ('the numbers') we are even more concerned with the quality of the changes we bring about and therefore the impact we have on the lives of children with disabilities and their families in Africa (qualitative data). Measuring this cuts across all our activities.

While we have always monitored the implementation and results of individual projects, over the next strategic period we aim to better measure and articulate our wider organisational impact. We will collect data against agreed indicators to measure progress towards the outcomes we seek to achieve. Going forward, we aim to analyse and summarise results in annual impact reports for internal and external scrutiny.

“ Identifying and furthering the talent from a child is my joy. [Growing up with a disability] I never had opportunities, that's why I want children to have more than I had ”

Sports Teacher

As with the rest of our work, we take a value driven approach to our Monitoring & Evaluating and Learning (MEL). We are committed to MEL approaches that are:

- **Child & Youth Led:** We believe that young people are best placed to tell us what has the most impact on their lives and how and why our interventions are working. We believe giving children and youth the opportunity to do so not only improves the quality of our work but provides value for money through increased efficiency of our MEL approaches. We commit to working with our partners to further develop child-centred MEL tools that give children and young people a meaningful chance to participate in decisions and interventions that impact their lives.
- **Disability Inclusive:** We believe that simply disaggregating data by disability is insufficient; involving people with disabilities in the design and implementation of monitoring systems is key to ensuring their full inclusion. We recognise that children with disabilities are often excluded in traditional monitoring practices due to compounding barriers of their age and disability. We commit to working with our partners to develop creative and effective MEL tools that are not only child-friendly but also disability-inclusive.
- **Partner Led:** We believe that our partners are best placed to design contextually-useful and accurate indicators or data collection tools. We commit to continuing to develop effective ways of working closely with our partners to create monitoring frameworks that meaningfully measure the changes we both wish to see.
- **Internationally Valuable:** We believe that valid, reliable and relevant disability data is essential for evidenced and effective interventions that improve the lives of children with disabilities. We recognise there is a global shortage of data on people, and in particular, children, with disabilities and that this plays a significant role in their exclusion. We commit to exploring ways of contributing to wider disability data initiatives and to supporting our partners to do the same.

## STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES ► OUTCOMES

**In partnership with African-led organisations, ensure children with disabilities and their families access services that enable them to realise their full potential.**

1. Children with disabilities have increased access to direct services that meet their needs.
2. Children with disabilities and their families are better able to demand access to direct services.
3. AbleChildAfrica's service delivery projects are inclusive of children with disabilities most often left behind (including girls with disabilities and children with complex or intellectual impairments).
4. Stakeholders across AbleChildAfrica projects have improved knowledge, attitudes and practice on the rights and potential of children and youth with disabilities.

**Build the capacity of a network of African-led disability organisations, both individually and collectively, to maximise the impact and sustainability of their work.**

1. AbleChildAfrica's local partners have improved capacity and capability to deliver their own organisational missions.
2. AbleChildAfrica facilitates a network of local partners that actively collaborate to share skills, knowledge and learning.

**Effect positive changes in the realisation of the rights of children with disabilities through strengthened policies, improved budgeting, and expanded opportunities for child and youth participation.**

1. The voices of children and youth with disabilities are influential, well respected and inform AbleChildAfrica's work.
2. Legal and policy frameworks better meet and fulfil the rights and priorities of children and youth with disabilities through working in partnership and coalitions.
3. Relevant actors recognise the importance of, and develop a greater understanding of how to generate and use qualitative and quantitative data to support evidence based policymaking and implementation.
4. AbleChildAfrica and our partners have increased capacity, skills and knowledge on advocacy and influencing.

**Continually advance AbleChildAfrica to ensure we stay fit for purpose and accountable to the children, families, donors and organisations we work with.**

1. AbleChildAfrica has improved capacity and capability to deliver our organisational mission.
2. AbleChildAfrica has robust policies, procedures and systems that remain fit for purpose to size, complexity and ever changing external environments.
3. AbleChildAfrica demonstrates continued learning and improved technical skills through collaboration with its partnership network.
4. AbleChildAfrica has sufficient funding and cashflow, from increasingly diverse and sustainable sources, to deliver against its workplans.

A more detailed MEL framework is available in Appendix 2.



# APPENDIX

## Appendix 1: Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Framework



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES	THE OUTCOMES	INDICATORS
<p>In partnership with African-led organisations, ensure children with disabilities and their families access services that enable them to realise their full potential.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 Children with disabilities have increased access to direct services that meet their needs.</li> <li>2 Children with disabilities and their families are better able to demand access to direct services.</li> <li>3 AbleChildAfrica's service delivery projects are inclusive of children with disabilities most often left behind (including girls with disabilities and children with complex or intellectual impairments).</li> <li>4 Stakeholders across AbleChildAfrica projects have improved KAP on the rights and potential of children and youth with disabilities.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.1 No. of children with disabilities who access essential services through AbleChildAfrica projects.</li> <li>1.2 No &amp; % of children with disabilities involved in AbleChildAfrica projects with access to essential services on equitable basis with their non-disabled peers.</li> <li>2.1 No &amp; % of children with disabilities with increased confidence to demand access to essential services as a result of AbleChildAfrica projects.</li> <li>2.2 No. and type of instances across AbleChildAfrica projects where caregivers of children with disabilities have demanded increased access to essential services.</li> <li>3.1 No and % of AbleChildAfrica projects that target children with disabilities most often left behind, as evidenced through tailored project activities and/or budget provisions.</li> <li>4.1 No &amp; % of stakeholders (children, caregivers, officials, community members), who have improved knowledge, attitudes and practice on the rights and potential of children with disabilities as a result of AbleChildAfrica activities.</li> </ol>
<p>Build the capacity of a network of African-led disability organisations, both individually and collectively, to maximise the impact and sustainability of their work.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 AbleChildAfrica's local partners have improved capacity and capability to deliver their own organisational missions.</li> <li>2 AbleChildAfrica facilitates a network of local partners that actively collaborate to share skills, knowledge and learning.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.1 Improved partner capacity and capability across mutually agreed 'areas of focus', as identified and measured annually using AbleChildAfrica's Partnership Impact Tool.</li> <li>1.2 The strength and quality of AbleChildAfrica's partnerships, individually and collectively, as measured by the 'working in partnership' section of the Partnership Impact Tool annually.</li> <li>2.1 No and types of instances where AbleChildAfrica has facilitated learning between partners within our network.</li> </ol>
<p>Effect positive changes in the realisation of the rights of children with disabilities through strengthened policies, improved budgeting, and expanded opportunities for child and youth participation.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 The voices of children and youth with disabilities are influential, well respected and inform AbleChildAfrica's work.</li> <li>2 Legal and policy frameworks better meet and fulfil the rights and priorities of children and youth with disabilities through working in partnership and coalitions.</li> <li>3 Relevant actors recognised the importance of, and develop a greater understanding of, how to generate and use qualitative and quantitative data to support evidence based policymaking and implementation.</li> <li>4 AbleChildAfrica and partners have increased capacity, skills and knowledge on advocacy and influencing.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.1 Progress of AbleChildAfrica's Youth Council towards meeting the outcomes and targets articulated in its own strategy and annual work plans, which are developed and lead by youth council members.</li> <li>1.2 No. and types of opportunities for children and youth with disabilities to influence decisions that impact their lives as a result of AbleChildAfrica projects.</li> <li>2.1 No and types of engagements where AbleChildAfrica's programmatic learning, supported by data, is translated into policy recommendations.</li> <li>2.2 No. and types of contributions AbleChildAfrica makes advocating for the rights and inclusion of children with disabilities to key networks or consortia.</li> <li>3.1 Examples of relevant actors improving their collection and use of disability data as a result of AbleChildAfrica's influence.</li> <li>4.1 Progress of AbleChildAfrica and our local partners' advocacy capacity and capability, as measured using the advocacy section of AbleChildAfrica's Partnership Impact Tool.</li> </ol>
<p>Continually advance AbleChildAfrica to ensure we stay fit for purpose and accountable to the children, families, donors and organisations we work with.</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1 AbleChildAfrica has improved capacity and capability to deliver our organisational mission.</li> <li>2 AbleChildAfrica has robust policies, procedures and systems that remain fit for purpose for the organisation's size, complexity and ever changing external environments.</li> <li>3 AbleChildAfrica demonstrates continued learning and improved technical skills through collaboration with its partnership network.</li> <li>4 AbleChildAfrica has sufficient funding and cashflow, from increasingly diverse and sustainable sources, to deliver against its workplans.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1.1 Progress towards annually agreed 'areas of focus', as identified and measured using our Partnership Impact Tool.</li> <li>1.2 Staff report feeling valued and committed to AbleChildAfrica.</li> <li>2.1 Results of annual statutory audits, donor due diligence assessments and external commissioned reviews.</li> <li>3.1 The strength and quality of AbleChildAfrica's partnerships, individually and collectively, as measured by the 'working in partnership' section of the Partnership Impact Tool annually.</li> <li>3.2 Annual progress towards the reciprocal learning 'area of focus', whereby partners build the capacity of AbleChildAfrica, as agreed with each partner in their Partnership Impact Tool.</li> <li>4.1 Progress towards agreed target ratio of unrestricted: restricted income</li> <li>4.2 £ and % of secured income against budget on a rolling 18 month forecast</li> <li>4.3 Secured pipeline of grant funding over rolling 5 year period</li> </ol>

## Appendix 2: Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. What do you mean by 'Children'?

AbleChildAfrica uses the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) as a framework and therefore views 'children' as those under the age of 18. While we feel our focus on children with disabilities is unique and fills a gap, we also believe that supporting children with disabilities in their transition into adulthood is an essential part of our strategy. We recognise that children with disabilities are often denied opportunities early in life and concurrently may need more time to achieve independence owing to their impairment. We are committed to ensuring young people with disabilities in Africa have every opportunity to achieve independence and that their families are supported through this transition. We are therefore open to projects and partners implementing livelihood, economic empowerment or transition projects for youth with disabilities and their families in Africa. We will typically use the national definition of 'youth' adopted by the country in question.

### 2. Why have you changed the language you use to 'children with disabilities' from 'disabled children'?

We recognise the complexities and ongoing debate surrounding terminology regarding disability. As an organisation in the UK we understand the UK disability movement's stated preference of using the terms 'disabled person' or 'disabled child' in recognition of the social model's primary tenet that an individual is disabled by societal barriers. However, as an international organisation primarily working outside the UK, and one driven by African-led development, we have chosen to adopt the person-first terminology (children with disabilities) strongly preferred by our partners in Africa and accepted internationally in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD).

### 3. How do you choose your partners?

AbleChildAfrica partners with African led organisations who share our vision and values and who are actively working to improve the life chances of children with disabilities and their families. We are open to partnerships across Sub-Saharan Africa without prejudice to a particular region. Before taking on a new partnership, AbleChildAfrica extensively researches the local context as well as the need and existing resources within the country. Our updated Partnership Model 2015 and any open calls for partnership are published on our website.

### 4. How do you ensure your funds really go to supporting children with disabilities in Africa?

As a smaller organisation we know all too well the value of every penny. With limited capacity we are extremely careful when selecting projects to invest our time and resources in. Similarly, by limiting the number of partnerships we have, we are able to ensure they are built on close working relationships, regular communication and mutual respect and transparency. We also work with our partners to identify and support their organisational development needs, often strengthening their financial management systems and efficiency.

We carefully consider the value for money of our advocacy and training work schemes and believe these have the potential for very high impact with low levels of investment. We aim to leverage both our collective voices and the resources of larger mainstream organisations to reach higher numbers of children with disabilities than we ever could alone. Our Theory of Change further sets out why we feel our approach offers value for money.

### 5. Does AbleChildAfrica focus on a particular impairment or disability?

No. We feel that many of the challenges children with disabilities and their families face, particularly when they are young, cut across the particular impairment of the child. We believe that all children with disabilities are entitled to inclusive services and that regardless of their individual impairments they have the right to be included alongside their siblings and peers in all aspects of their lives. Poverty can be both a cause and consequence of disability in Africa and the challenges this creates for children and families also cut across impairments. We do of course recognise that each child is unique and that their particular impairment or condition will almost certainly impact upon the services they need. Where needed, we call upon the expertise of individuals or organisations with specialisation in a particular impairment.

### 6. Do you focus on particular thematic areas (such as health or education) over others?

No, but as a rights based organisation we take particular account of thematic areas where the rights enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child overlap – including important issues such as education, health and social inclusion. We are aware that the most marginalised children and families, and those living in poverty, often have complex needs and that meaningfully addressing these needs may cut across multiple thematic areas. Part of our mission is to facilitate the inclusion of children with disabilities and their families in all aspects of daily life; as such we are open to supporting projects which address any of the numerous barriers to this across Africa. We do not require our partners to focus on particular thematic areas, choosing instead to value local voices and listening to the stated priorities of our colleagues on the ground.

### 7. How are you funded?

During our last strategic period AbleChildAfrica received the majority of its funding (approx 2/3) from grant making bodies including trusts, foundations and institutional donors. The remaining 1/3 came from companies, events and individual donors. An up to date list of current donors is always available on our website.

### 8. What do you mean by 'quality' programmes?

To be of high quality we feel programmes for children with disabilities should be:

- Inclusive
- Rights-based
- Scalable and / or replicable
- Relevant (grounded in local context)
- Evidence-based/ effective
- Equitable
- Convenient for users
- Child & family centred
- Affordable
- Efficient

### 9. How can I get involved?

We encourage you to visit our website ([www.ablechildafrica.org](http://www.ablechildafrica.org)) to learn more about our work; whilst you are there please sign up for our monthly e-news and visit the 'get involved' page. There you will find information about how to become a Friend of AbleChildAfrica as well as regular opportunities to volunteer, participate in the London Marathon and invitations to join us at various events. We are dependent on, and grateful for, the support of individuals, companies and grant making donors alike and as a smaller organisation we feel we are able to offer you a personal link and connection to the cause.

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AbleChildAfrica  
Suite 419, Hannibal House  
Elephant & Castle Shopping Centre  
London SE1 6TE

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

