ERIKS Development Policy

1. Introduction

ERIKS Development Partner (ERIKS) operates within a continuously changing world. ERIKS’ development work and commitment to the fulfilment of the rights of the child is guided by its identity and its values: the spirit of Erik Nilsson (the founder of ERIKS), Christian values and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). This document describes ERIKS’ approach to development and its theory of change. The purpose is to illustrate how ERIKS believes positive change takes place, i.e. how its vision of a better world where children’s dreams come true can be reached.

ERIKS strongly believes that change is possible. Transforming the world with and for children is a long-term process that involves fighting poverty and injustice. All genuine change requires the active participation of children in influencing and improving the society they live in.

ERIKS mission is to combat poverty and vulnerability by promoting children’s rights. Poverty does not only refer to economic aspects but is defined as multidimensional; a state where people are deprived of rights and possibilities to make decisions for their own lives and future. Lack of influence, security and opportunities are the essence of poverty.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the UNCRC, as well as the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are in line with ERIKS’ goals and important tools in achieving sustainable change, leading to a better world where children’s dreams come true.

As a child rights organisation, ERIKS has chosen to focus its work on four areas, which are all crucial to reach the organisation’s vision and mission:

- the right to education and leisure
- the right to health
- the right to protection
- humanitarian assistance and DRR (Disaster Risk Reduction)

In all its programmes, ERIKS is promoting increased understanding and application of the UNCRC. The four thematic areas are further explained in appendices attached to this Development Policy.
1.2 Scope and orientation of the policy
This policy is adopted by the board of ERIKS Development Partner. It falls directly under the policy document “I kärlekens tjänst”, which describes the organisation’s identity, vision, mission, values and culture.

ERIKS Development Policy applies to all programmes and interventions of the organisation and is a guiding document for ERIKS’ country strategies.

2. Theory of Change

At the starting point of the theory of change are situations where the rights of the child are not fulfilled, which is motivating change. Violations of children's rights are closely connected to situations of poverty and vulnerability. Hence, fighting poverty and vulnerability and promoting the rights of the child goes hand in hand. When the rights of the child are neglected, efforts to reduce poverty and vulnerability are hampered. In the same way, poverty is a hindrance to the fulfilment of the rights of the child.

The process of change towards the fulfilment of ERIKS’ vision is complex. Therefore, the theory of change and its different components, as illustrated above and described in text below, is a simplified picture of the reality. It aims at explaining the rationale of ERIKS’ work and how the organisation would like to promote its vision. The following sections are describing the core components that ERIKS believes are necessary in the change process towards a better world where children’s dreams come true. This process is not linear, but characterised by interactions between different actors (children, moral duty-bearers and legal duty-bearers), as described in section 2.2. In order for the interaction between these actors to take place in the best interest of the child, ERIKS has decided on a number of
strategic approaches. These are summarised below and further explained in separate position papers.

2.1 Strategic approaches

Human Rights-Based Approach

ERIKS is planning and implementing its programmes using a Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA) with a clear child rights perspective. Applying HRBA means looking beyond the effects of poverty and other rights violations and identifying and addressing their root causes. The principles of participation, accountability, non-discrimination, empowerment, and links to the human rights frameworks are key components of HRBA, combined with a strong gender perspective. Gender equality is a precondition for the fulfilment of human rights. As a child rights organisation, ERIKS’ application of HRBA has a specific focus on child participation (see below) and the tool “Child Rights Programming” based on three pillars with actions that concur to promote the rights of the child.

Child participation

As one of the core principles of the UNCRC, the right to participation stands on its own and challenges the view of the child as a passive receiver of support. ERIKS is committed to promote child participation in all stages of the project cycle. Child participation should not be limited to ad hoc activities, but mainstreamed in all ERIKS’ work. This means that child participation should always be an integrated way of working and a long-term strategy in the realisation of children’s rights. Child participation shall be relevant and provide girls and boys with opportunities to be listened to and influence decision-making, in accordance with the evolving capacity of the child.

Resilience

ERIKS Theory of Change has a holistic, child focused perspective on development. This means that ERIKS’ ambition is to promote improved resilience and sustainability, through strengthening the families, care-givers and communities around the child. ERIKS’ resilience approach targets the intersection of humanitarian and development activities. Close partnership with local civil society, together with humanitarian capacity, gives ERIKS

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1 ERIKS Development Partner: Position Paper on Human Rights-Based Approach/Child Rights Approach (to be developed)
4 Pillar 1: Direct actions on violations of children’s rights and gaps in provision. Pillar 2: Strengthening the capacity of duty-bearers to meet their obligations. Pillar 3: Strengthening the understanding and capacity of children, their carers and civil society to claim rights and hold others to account. Source: Ibd.
5 ERIKS Development Partner, 2018: Position Paper on Child Participation
6 ERIKS Development Partner: Position Paper on Resilience (to be developed)
prerequisites to support long-term sustainability and resilience of targeted communities. According to ERIKS, *livelhood* activities are an important strategy in building resilience of local communities.

**Partnership with civil society**

In its work to promote positive change, ERIKS identifies working through and together with the civil society as strategically important. A vibrant civil society is essential for a peaceful and democratic development and the possibilities for people to organise themselves are important prerequisites for an inclusive and healthy society. Therefore, partnership with local civil society actors is the entry point for ERIKS in its child rights work. ERIKS’ approach to achieving change is to work in close partnership with civil society and local implementing partner organisations.

### 2.2 Key actors and change agents

Through its partner organisations, ERIKS collaborates with a wide range of key actors surrounding the child, who all have the possibilities to contribute to the fulfilment of the rights of the child. ERIKS believes that sustainable change can only be achieved if actors within the local context take actions. When these actors, in their different capacities, stand up for the rights of the child, they become change agents. ERIKS supports increased interaction between the following change agents: *children, moral duty-bearers and legal duty-bearers*. The section below provides a summary of the roles that each actor play in change processes towards a better world for children.

**Children**

The fulfilment of the rights of the child and improved situation for girls and boys is the goal of all ERIKS’ work. According to ERIKS, children are actors with capacities and resources to achieve positive change in their lives and the society they live in. At the same time, children have the right to protection from any rights violations. When positive change, in line with the UNCRC, is taking place, girls and boys are enjoyment their rights, participating in all areas that affect their lives, according to their evolving capacity.

**Legal duty-bearers**

Legal duty-bearers are actors with legal responsibilities of *respecting, protecting, fulfilling* and *facilitating* the rights of the child, in accordance with the UNCRC. The legal duty-bearer is the state at different levels (including its parliament, ministries, local authorities etc.), as well as parents and care-givers, depending on the context.

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7 ERIKS Development Partner, 2018: Position Paper on Partnership
Moral duty-bearers

Moral duty-bearers are actors and individuals with power to affect the lives of children and hence with a moral duty to act for an improved situation for girls and boys, in line with the UNCRC. Among the moral duty-bearers are parents and care givers, communities, civil society organisations, religious actors and private sector. Through advocating, filling gaps and developing capacity the moral duty-bearers are contributing to the fulfilment of the rights of the child.

2.3 Interaction for change

Progress towards ERIKS’ vision will be made when the change agents take on their roles and responsibilities as described above. This requires that they are given the possibilities and capacities, courage and tools to interact and promote the best interest of the child. Crucial components of this change process are: improved level of knowledge regarding the rights of the child, empowerment of boys and girls and actors surrounding the children, changed attitudes and behaviour, as well as improved accountability in favour of the fulfilment of the rights of the child. This is facilitated through ERIKS’ strategic approaches (partnership with civil society, HRBA, child participation and resilience). As an example, when a community-based organisation together with students calls for a meeting with the local authorities, advocating for improved access to education, and the responsible duty-bearer is fulfilling and facilitating this right, change towards a better world for children takes place. Every interaction between children, moral duty-bearers and legal duty-bearers is valuable in the complex and continuous change processes supported by ERIKS Development Partner.