

# International Strategy

2022-2026



# 1. Introduction and Background

ERIKS' vision is **a better world where children's dreams come true.**

This strategy aims to be an overarching document for strategic guidance in relation to ERIKS' international programmes. It covers programme countries, thematic areas, partner organisations and the level of intervention, both long-term development and humanitarian assistance. It also covers some of the aspects concerning visibility, networking and advocacy.

Over the last years, ERIKS has experienced a very stable financial situation with increased funding from various sources. In relation to that, ERIKS sees the need of ensuring a stable growth for the International Department and its international programmes. ERIKS wants to expand, both in quality and quantity, but need to do so in

a strategic and structured manner avoiding rapid changes, particularly in relation to partner organisations.

This strategy is based on ERIKS' identity as an organisation, its Development Policy and Position Papers. It is further guided by overall strategic documents and the recently launched new structure and delegation order between Head Office and Regional Offices. It should be seen as a complement for **strategic guidance**, particularly in the development of individual country strategies but also in relation to overall prioritisations. In addition to internal steering documents, international programmes are also guided by a number of external Conventions, Protocols, Standards and Frameworks. The most prominent one being the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Further, ERIKS also aligns

with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), not only in relation to the specific goals and indicators, but also in the overall idea that all sectors need to cooperate to achieve sustainable change. ERIKS needs to be creative, strengthen innovation, and ensure collaboration with a wide range of actors in each context to ensure the fulfil-

ment of children's rights. In line with the humanitarian work ERIKS adheres to the main international standards and principles including the Humanitarian Principles, Core Humanitarian Standard on Quality and Accountability (CHS), and Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (CPMS).

## 2. Recent Developments

Over the last few years, ERIKS has seen a rapidly changing world with trends and developments that affect ERIKS' possibilities to reach its vision. The trends and developments are interlinked and include, but are not limited to:

- **Increased inequalities, due to pandemics and diseases**, both on a global level as well as on the level of individual countries and individuals. The COVID-19 pandemic being one such example.
- **Ongoing climate and environmental crisis** where climate related disasters increase, affecting the already most vulnerable communities.
- **Shrinking civil societies and democratic space** in many of the programme countries where ERIKS operates, leading to increased conflicts, crisis, insecurity, corruption and misuse of public funds.
- **Increased conflicts**, both internal as well as between countries and regions where extremism and polarisation thrive. The war in Ukraine, in 2022, also highlights the fact that in the globalised world we live in, a war or a conflict in one region also has implications for other parts of the world.

Faced by these types of crises, the most vulnerable become even more vulnerable,



and as such children pay a high price. ERIKS also sees that girls have been particularly affected in relation to all these developments. This needs to be taken into consideration in future interventions and efforts. For us, as a child rights organisation, this work becomes even more important. With determination ERIKS must continue its strive. Through partnering with organisations in each country, through capacity development and learning, strengthening local civil societies and advocating for the rights of all children. ERIKS does this **for children, and the world they dream of.**



### 3. ERIKS as a Child Rights Organisation

ERIKS is a child rights organisation and over the coming strategy period ERIKS would like to further strengthen the child rights-based approach in all supported interventions, specifically including child protection and child participation. ERIKS needs to focus even more on ensuring that child rights programming and child participation, as strategic approaches, will not be isolated to components or activities but rather approaches and strategies included in all phases of interventions, from planning to implementation as well as monitoring, evaluation, and learning. To ensure child participation, there are many

methods and approaches to be applied. The local context should be guiding. Child rights clubs, child parliaments or similar are examples to be used, but the important aspect is to ensure that different groups of children can actively participate throughout the intervention cycle. While doing so, ERIKS needs to ensure that they are safe, not exposed to additional risks and that clear reporting mechanisms are in place. Here ERIKS also needs to consider the different perspectives of different groups of children to ensure that ERIKS contributes to equality and in particular gender equality.



### 4. Programme Countries

ERIKS will throughout the strategy period, support interventions in the following countries through each Regional Office responsible for its regional operations. Country representation has been highligh-

ted in relation to both current representation but also in line with additional country representation to be established over the strategy period:

<b>Eastern Europe</b>	<b>Regional Office Romania</b>	Republic of Moldova
		Romania
		Ukraine – Humanitarian response and follow-up
<b>West Africa</b>	<b>Regional Office Burkina Faso</b>	Mali (Country representation)
		Burkina Faso
		Benin (Country representation)
<b>East Africa</b>	<b>Regional Office Uganda</b>	Uganda
		Kenya (Country representation)
		South Sudan (Country representation)
		Ethiopia
<b>Asia</b>	<b>Regional Office Cambodia</b>	Cambodia
		Myanmar (Country representation)
		Laos
		Bangladesh (Country representation)
		India

## 5. Thematic Areas, Strategic Approaches and Crosscutters

ERIKS is operating within the following thematic areas, each of them outlined in individual thematic position papers:

- Education and Leisure
- Health
- Protection
- Humanitarian Assistance

All thematic areas listed above are equally important and interlinked to ensure a holistic approach in relation to the fulfilment of children's rights. In the elaboration of each country strategy, all thematic areas should be analysed and considered. However, it is not a requirement to work within all areas in each country. However, the **analysis and decisions regarding thematic priorities should be clearly documented in each individual country strategy.**

In addition to the thematic areas, ERIKS has four strategic approaches, each of them outlined in individual strategic position papers:

- Child rights programming
- Child Participation
- Resilience
- Partnership

According to ERIKS' Development Policy, the **strategic approaches** should be applied and considered in all supported interventions. Considering the situation, following the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing environmental and climate crisis, ERIKS sees livelihood initiatives becoming even more important in the programme countries. Livelihood is one aspect that is included in ERIKS' resilience approach where ERIKS sees sustainable livelihoods as key to be able to deal with shocks and stresses. In line with that, ERIKS needs to see how sup-

porting diversification and strengthening of livelihoods can be further integrated in resilience actions within communities.

Further, the following four areas have been defined as **crosscutters**:

- Gender
- Environment/Climate
- Conflict sensitivity
- Religion

As crosscutters they should be integrated in all supported interventions but from the perspective of children's rights. ERIKS needs to make sure that ERIKS contributes to gender equality, that ERIKS does not harm the environment or increase conflicts or tensions, including aspects of religion, in each respective context by making proper analysis and assessments per each supported intervention. The child rights-based approach is ERIKS' core and starting point for all supported interventions, and it is through the perspective of children's rights that ERIKS also needs to understand the crosscutters.



## 6. Partner Organisations

A foundation and a central part of ERIKS' theory of change is linked to the strong belief of working together with civil society organisations. ERIKS believes that a strong civil society is an important part of strengthening the developments within a country, forming a natural counterpart to the State that is needed in democratic development. The organisations are well established and familiar within the context where they operate, and the interventions can therefore become even more relevant

and sustainable. These organisations have a strong presence needed to build trust within a given context and hence are able to quickly navigate under changing circumstances. ERIKS' international work is therefore built on respectful partnerships with civil society organisations that share the same vision.

Over the coming strategy period the following global overall outcome will direct and guide in relation to ERIKS' partner organisations.

### Global Overall Outcome

ERIKS' partner organisations are respecting girls' and boys' equal entitlements to the rights of the child, as stipulated in the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), hence working in accordance with the General Principles of the UNCRC. Through systematic learning and efficient collaboration, ERIKS and its partner organisations are continuously adapting their work and striving for peaceful, inclusive, equal, democratic, sustainable, and resilient societies for all children to grow up in. ERIKS' partner organisations are further enhancing the respect of the natural environment and reducing the risks of climate change within the local context. As such, contributing to the UNCRC and the SDGs 5, 10, 11, 13, 16.

ERIKS believes in having a **variation of partner organisation in terms of level of operation from nationwide to smaller grassroots organisations.** ERIKS believes that the different levels of operation reinforce each other and contribute to the possibilities of successful learning as well as advocacy, contributing to long-lasting changes. Among ERIKS' partnerships, there should also be a representation of organisations focusing on **long-term development and organisations focusing on humanitarian assistance in each programme country**, in line with humanitarian needs. ERIKS would also like to see additional focus on **national advocacy in each programme country.**

Throughout this strategy period ERIKS would like to further increase its focus on partner organisations by reviewing the financial supporting mechanisms in place. ERIKS would like to move away from a strong focus on supporting individual projects to a more aid efficient support, with a mix of project, programme<sup>1</sup>, and core support<sup>2</sup> to enable partner organisations to grow. The reason being that ERIKS believes that programme support or core funding, better align with the idea of strengthening each individual partner organisation. **In each region, ERIKS would therefore like to see an increase of programme and core funding.**

<sup>1</sup> Programme support meaning integrating several individually supported interventions into one overall programme

<sup>2</sup> Core funding meaning unrestricted funding to a partner organisations' overall strategic plan and operations.

## 7. Interventions – Long-term Development and Humanitarian Assistance

ERIKS supports interventions within both long-term development and humanitarian assistance. As previously mentioned, ERIKS wants to expand, both in quality and quantity, but needs to do so in a strategic and structured manner.

Over the coming strategy period the following global overall outcomes will direct and guide in relation to country strategies and hence supported interventions.

### Global Overall Outcome

Children are learning about, enjoying and developing equal entitlements to their rights concerning quality education and leisure, good and equitable health as well as their right to protection. They are enjoying non-discrimination, including gender equality and freedom of religion, in a peaceful environment. All children are recognised as rights-holders, with opportunity and capacity to know, claim and obtain their rights according to the UNCRC. Children are enjoying safe spaces and are equipped with tools and possibilities to advocate for their rights. Girls and boys are participating on equal terms and in a meaningful way in all matters concerning them, including disaster and climate hazards risk reduction and the respect of the natural environment. As such, contributing to the UNCRC and the SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11, 13, 16.

Legal duty bearers are taking appropriate measures to respect, protect, facilitate and fulfil girls' and boys' equal entitlements to their rights concerning education and leisure, good and equitable health as well as their right to protection. They are ensuring non-discrimination, including gender equality and freedom of religion, as well as a peaceful environment. They are taking appropriate measures to meet their obligation to ensure that communities are becoming resilient, enhancing the respect of the natural environment, reducing the risks of climate change, as well as protecting and assisting different groups of children affected by crises. As such, contributing to the UNCRC and the SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11, 13, 16.

Moral duty bearers are promoting girls' and boys' equal entitlements to their rights concerning quality education and leisure, good and equitable health as well as their right to protection. They are promoting non-discrimination, including gender equality and freedom of religion, as well as a peaceful environment. They are considering the special needs of children, supporting them in defending their rights. Communities are becoming resilient, enhancing the respect of the natural environment and reducing the risks of climate change. As such, contributing to the UNCRC and the SDGs 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 8, 10, 11, 13, 16.



In the light of recent developments, ERIKS believes that it will be more important to link humanitarian, development, and peace activities when planning interventions (triple nexus). Previously ERIKS has formulated separate outcomes relating to the two areas long-term development and humanitarian assistance, but where ERIKS now sees the need to integrate both these areas since they in different ways contribute to the fulfilment of children's rights. Similarly, ERIKS has also integrated the thematic areas of education and leisure, health and protection on a global level since ERIKS sees that they are interlinked and mutually reinforcing.

Even though ERIKS already sees a close connection between long-term development supported interventions and humanitarian assistance, **ERIKS needs to further learn and elaborate its take on the triple nexus, further exploring the possibilities to build capacity among partners in community driven peacebuilding.** Similarly, ERIKS needs to see how disaster preparedness and disaster risk reduction can be integrated in resilience actions within communities.

In ERIKS' position paper on humanitarian assistance, the following strategic priorities were defined for 2021-2024:

- To have at least one partner with strong humanitarian capacity and ability to apply for institutional funding in each programme country with recurrent crisis. If such partner is lacking, the humanitarian capacity should be a priority when selecting a new partner, given that all other prerequisites are fulfilled.
- To ensure that all humanitarian interventions address aspects of child protection.
- To organise at least one regional capacity development intervention per year related to humanitarian capacity.
- To focus on the Core Humanitarian Standards (CHS), the Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (CPMS) and resilience within capacity development initiatives.
- To investigate the possibility to become a member of the CHS Alliance and apply for membership.
- To develop relationships with a few large humanitarian actors that could be used to channel funds when major crisis occurs outside ERIKS' programme countries.

**Through this strategy, ERIKS would like to extend these priorities throughout this strategy period (2022-2026).** In addition, ERIKS would also further like to **strengthen structures and routines in relation to humanitarian assistance.** The humanitarian needs are growing in all regions, and ERIKS needs to **align its human resources, both at Head Office and Regional Offices** in relation to this. ERIKS also needs to investigate whether any **further prioritisation and focus for ERIKS' within the area of humanitarian assistance is needed.**

## 8. Concepts

In addition to an increased focus on peer-to-peer learning in terms of best practices, both between regions and partner organisations, ERIKS sees that there are concepts or components in ongoing supported interventions that ERIKS might be able to transfer to other contexts, countries and regions. The main reasons would be harmonisation as well as increased quality in operations. Nonetheless it needs to be considered in relation to contextual needs. These concepts/components include, but are not limited to:

- **Promotion of family-based care and deinstitutionalisation of children.** This is also connected to aspects in ERIKS' global advocacy strategy and projects implemented in Sweden raising awareness in terms of institutionalisation of children.
- Strengthening of child participation through **child rights clubs, child parliaments** and similar. This is also in line with the aim to further strengthen child participation within supported interventions, as previously mentioned.
- **Accelerated learning.** In the light of the COVID-19 pandemic and closing of schools throughout the world, millions

of children have lost important years of schooling. Remote teaching might also be one aspect in relation to this where ERIKS has experience since before, for example in Bangladesh.

- **Strengthening of child and maternal health care.** Connecting local and traditional structures with formal health care, for example traditional birth attendants (TBA), making it possible to reach marginalised areas.
- **Strengthening of child protection structures** through for example community-based child protection referral mechanisms.
- **Menstrual Health.** Focusing on three key areas; Individual (self-care and self-awareness), Practical (Technical resources) and Social (enabling environment).

All contexts are unique, and it might therefore not be possible to fully transfer and duplicate any of the above from one country or region to another. However, by **enabling a sharing between regions** ERIKS can identify what concepts could be duplicated. **Enabling a platform for such sharing should therefore be further analysed and elaborated.**

## 9. Visibility - Networking - Advocacy

Throughout the regions, ERIKS sees a need to increase visibility. The visibility is interlinked with networking and with the possibilities to engage in national advocacy as well as resource mobilisation in respective programme countries.

Networking is the key entry point relating to both national advocacy and resource mobilisation. Networking is also an important part in the process of identifying new partner organisations and partners for consortium. **In each country strategy, an outline should therefore be made in relation to what networks that are most relevant to engage in.**

In 2022, ERIKS' Board of Directors approved a new global advocacy strategy and plan. The following thematic areas of advocacy on a global level were identified for the period 2022-2025:

- Increased child rights perspective on local, national and international level, in particular with a focus on increasing the possibilities for children to participate and be active in areas that concern them.

- The right of all children to grow up in a family, working for deinstitutionalisation of children as well as strengthening family and community-based care.
- Focus on sustainable, climate-smart production and consumption to address the climate changes, in particular addressing how children are affected by climate changes and where investments are needed to form resilient communities.
- Equal opportunities for children in Sweden with a focus on particularly vulnerable and exposed areas as well as children having a parent or close relative in prison.

In addition to the global areas of advocacy, **an outline should also be made in each country strategy concerning areas of national advocacy**, based on network engagements, current partner organisations and thematic focus.

Moving forward ERIKS sees the need to strengthen resource mobilisation in respective programme countries. This is a long-term process where the first steps would be increased visibility and networking.

## 10. Follow-up and Evaluation

This strategy will apply for the period 2022-2026 but could be revised if deemed necessary based on unforeseen events that clearly affects the possibilities to achieve the strategic directions outlined in this document.





ERIKS

For the children. And the world they dream of.