

## SECTION 3: CALL FOR ACTION

On the occasion of the 20<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child The African Child Policy Forum, Childwatch International Research Network and Unicef Innocenti organised “**Children’s Rights at a Crossroads**”, a global conference on research and child rights in Addis Ababa from 30 November – 2 December 2009. The more than 300 participants, representing academic institutions, international organizations, governments, non-governmental organizations, civil society and youth, met to renew their commitment to children’s rights and the role of knowledge in advancing this cause.

The meeting aimed to identify key dimensions of a global research agenda for the realization of children’s rights; to establish a framework for collaboration between policy makers, practitioners and academics for the improved use of research, and to develop models of collaboration with youth in participatory research.

The participants call upon the research community, in partnership with governments, international and regional organisations, policy makers, practitioners, civil society, youth and children, to collaborate in undertaking the following actions as critical to advancing the global knowledge base for the realization of children’s rights.

### To identify and fill knowledge gaps:

- Strengthen the understanding of all children’s lives and children’s rights, through a deeper appraisal of existing knowledge and the development of new research
- Give attention to areas that are currently underdeveloped or neglected by research but which are critical to the fulfilment of children’s rights.

Identified areas include, *inter alia*: child poverty and inequality; early childhood development; child mental health; children with disabilities; child labour; social welfare services; children’s civil rights (right to expression, decision making, association, information); children’s care settings (parents, family, household, school); children dwelling outside traditional environments (street children, children on the move due to trafficking, asylum seeking, migration); war and conflict; violence and HIV/AIDS; new technologies (internet); global economic and development policies and emerging global issues (economic downturn, climate change)

- Initiate and support the collection of real-time, disaggregated, comparable and gender-sensitive data to monitor key trends affecting children’s lives
- Understand how the participation of children can be effectively promoted in research, develop good practice guidelines and conduct training in child participatory methods with stakeholders
- Undertake comparative studies in a rights perspective, for example on the ways in which laws and practices respect children’s right to be heard and to participate; and on how the evolving capacity of the child is reflected in rules and regulations across countries
- Use the Concluding Observations and General Comments of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child to guide research priorities

### To promote knowledge generation on children’s rights:

- Widen the understanding of what constitutes ‘knowledge’, reduce compartmentalisation of disciplines and support collaborative, cross-disciplinary research. Use and value a

range of methodologies, including quantitative and qualitative approaches, anchoring research at the grassroots level and empowering local communities to ensure that research findings are acted upon

- Ensure the participation of children themselves in child-related research, reflecting the critical contribution that they can provide in these processes
- Understand and respond to the ethical challenges of research and adopt approaches that respect all stakeholders and their right to privacy and assurance of consent
- Enable and promote open access to sources of data and knowledge
- Ensure that research agendas reflect local, national and international priorities
- Monitor the realization of children's rights through the establishment of independent initiatives and mechanisms to track and report on progress
- Strengthen the capacity of research institutions, with a specific focus on developing countries, secure adequate funding, promote their independence and critical role.
- Expand the coverage and use of knowledge across languages and cultures by encouraging relevant studies to be undertaken by native speakers and promoting wide and effective translation of research findings
- Build a network of researchers in Africa to address the current knowledge gaps on African children and develop a research agenda and plan for action over the coming five years

### To increase knowledge use, management and sharing

- Identify and assess research that has so far been conducted in the field of child rights and take steps to promote

its effective use.

- Develop pilot initiatives linking key stakeholders in the use of knowledge
- Make research findings understandable and easily accessible and support their publication in all available forms, even when findings may not be favourable to the body funding the research
- Share knowledge resources with communities in developing countries, while not imposing ideas or actions
- Secure equal opportunities to publish research findings, giving priority to building the capacity of young researchers
- Pilot and develop effective strategies for communicating knowledge, including use of open access databases and community-level dissemination through popular media
- Secure that the development and enforcement of laws to fulfil children's rights are based on solid evidence

### Addressing the political context

- Understand and critically engage with the national and international political and ideological contexts in which research is conducted
- Identify the incentives and barriers that promote or hinder knowledge generation, uptake and translation into policy making and practice
- The participants in the conference commit to collaborating on taking this agenda forward and to promote the principles in this Call for Action in all efforts towards securing children's rights.