



STRATEGIC PLAN 2016-2018: EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“The world is asking and needing all of us to do much more, and better. Watchlist is well-positioned to build on its formidable and commendable achievements and, with the right kind of support and partnerships, do more and better in making child rights a reality.”

MISSION STATEMENT:

Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict strives to end violations against children in armed conflicts and to guarantee their rights. As a global network, the Watchlist builds partnerships among local, national and international nongovernmental organizations, enhancing mutual capacities and strengths. Working together, we strategically collect and disseminate information on violations against children in conflicts in order to influence key decision-makers to create and implement programs and policies that effectively protect children.

Watchlist on Children and Armed Conflict is a project of Tides Center, a non-profit public charity.

More than a “starting point,” Watchlist’s 2016-2018 strategic plan is a continuing point that builds on a rich, successful 15-year history of qualitative growth and commitment guided by clear needs, values, and vision. Watchlist has evolved from a “start-up” in 2001 into a recognized and leading organization in the field of children’s rights in armed conflict by providing products and services related to the implementation of the UN-led Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism (MRM). Today, the number of children impacted by armed conflict has grown to some of the highest levels since World War II. These new realities do not mean that the intentions and efforts of the humanitarian system as implemented over the past decades are no longer relevant. Rather, they are necessary steps but no longer suffice to make child rights a reality in armed conflict. A shift in the kinds of responses we make collectively as a professional community, and individually as organizations, is imperative. Watchlist will “step up” in its next strategic period and make key shifts, as it has done in the past, to remain relevant and effective in addressing the needs and rights of children in a changing world.



Watchlist Programs 2016-2018:

ADVOCACY PROGRAM:

Through its Children and Armed Conflict (CAC) Monthly Updates, Watchlist will continue its efforts to mainstream children and armed conflict in the UN Security Council, and follow the Security Council's Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict. The Advocacy Program will contribute to the goal of an "accurate and credible list of perpetrators" through the publication of an annual "policy brief", and will explore the question of denial of humanitarian access as a trigger violation. The Advocacy Program will support Goal 3 through advocacy geared towards the selection of a small group of MRM countries and perpetrators for the signing and subsequent implementation of action plans to

Watchlist's aim and strategic goals: In 2016 – 2018, Watchlist will seek to protect the lives of children in war zones by holding accountable **(1)** parties to conflict who commit grave violations; and **(2)** UN actors that implement the UN's Children and Armed Conflict (CAC) agenda. In order to do so, Watchlist will pursue the following four strategic goals:

GOAL 1

Watchlist will work with others to explore and contribute to the development of **more effective monitoring, reporting, and response to child rights violations**. The MRM, as a survey system captures a low percentage of the grave violations vis-a-vis their presumed prevalence in high risk/high violence contexts. Data collection is further hampered by the UN Security Council's political requirement for UN verification. **NGO inputs** must be better used by Country Task Forces and by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (SRSG-CAAC). Therefore, Watchlist will continue to support and train local and national partners in conflict zones to monitor, report, and respond to grave child rights violations. In addition, Watchlist will explore with partners **complementary data collection methods** that are needed to more accurately capture what is happening to children and to guide actions on the ground.

GOAL 2

Watchlist will work with others to produce **a more accurate and credible list of perpetrators of child rights violations**. Certain parties to conflict avoid being listing on the UN Secretary-General's annual 'blacklist' of perpetrators. Political considerations have influenced the (de) listing of parties. A key shift in Watchlist's approach will consist of the development of a yearly "policy brief" that highlights perpetrators of child rights violations that have not been held to account for their actions by the formal system.

end and prevent grave violations against children. As part of Goal 4, Watchlist will continue to review the working methods of the Security Council Working Group, and explore new methods for adopting country-specific conclusions in an efficient and timely manner.

RESEARCH PROGRAM:

Watchlist will continue to plan, develop, publish, and advocate on a series of Field Monitor-type reports, but in this strategic period tailor the themes to support its below-mentioned goal areas, and more specifically focus on the documentation of attacks on hospitals, and its impact on children in situations of armed conflict.

PARTNERSHIPS PROGRAM:

The cornerstone of the Partnerships Program in the previous period was to develop a continuous analysis of partner experiences with the MRM so as to identify recurring gaps and challenges and distill recommendations to improve the global mechanism. These experiences were consolidated in “The 1612 Monitoring and Reporting Mechanism: A Resource Pack for NGOs.” The Program will continue to support, and train, national organizations to monitor and report on child rights violations, but in this strategic period, the program will also collaborate with others to complement the case-specific, accountability driven data collection of the MRM with survey-type data that explicitly caters to child protection partners in real time.



GOAL 3

A third shift will be to **ensure more action plans are implemented successfully**. To date, only 23 of the armed forces and groups ever listed have signed action plans, and, to date, only 9 fully complied with those plans and were delisted as a result. The joint campaign by UNICEF and the SRSG-CAAC, “Children, Not Soldiers” focuses on ending the recruitment and use of child soldiers by government security forces. Non-state armed actors comprise the vast majority of listed perpetrators, yet were not included in the campaign. Watchlist will work with others to **encourage the adoption and implementation of action plans**.

GOAL 4

A fourth shift will be to **advocate for accountability of perpetrators of violations through the effective implementation of the CAC agenda**. The CAC agenda has been successful at building awareness and bringing high-level attention to the issue at a global level. It is not clear, however, how much this has resulted in changes on the ground – where children are affected by war. Today’s conflicts are characterized by high levels of child recruitment and use, sexual violence, killing and maiming, abductions and attacks on schools and hospitals. Watchlist will **advocate with UN actors to hold all perpetrators accountable for child rights violations**.

Watchlist Operations 2016-2018:



GOVERNANCE:

In this period, Watchlist's Advisory Board may recruit up to three additional members with a view towards strengthening the mobilization of stakeholders to further the CAC agenda.



OPERATIONS:

The five permanent staff positions will be maintained (Project Director, Advocacy Officer, Research Officer, Partnership Officer and Program Manager), but, Watchlist's aim is growth. Funding will be sought for additional positions, including a dedicated Development Officer, a dedicated Communications Officer, and junior staff members to reinforce the Research Program and allow for the development of a geographic focus.



FUNDRAISING:

Watchlist funds are raised by its program staff, and this can lead to a heavy workload. In its bid to move beyond an annual operating budget of \$1M, Watchlist will seek to attract dedicated development personnel, who will focus on the identification, and retention, of new institutional donors. Second, Watchlist will work with the development departments of its Advisory Board organizations to identify opportunities for joint programming.



COMMUNICATIONS:

Watchlist will continue to be the "go-to" organization on children and armed conflict in the new strategic period. Its updated website and social media tools will remain a resource for anyone wanting to learn more about the UN CAC agenda or seeking country-specific information.

Last but certainly not least, the role of **new technologies** in both perpetrating and documenting grave child rights violations is a notable trend that may offer important insights and opportunities for Watchlist. In 2015, Watchlist's smartphone application received the first ever Prize in Innovation in Global Security from the Geneva Centre for Security Policy. In the new strategic period, Watchlist will expand the functioning of its app towards MRM practitioners in the field, and seek to operationalize emerging developments in the field of humanitarian information and communications technology that can be used to enhance the collection, sorting, analysis, storage and dissemination of data on grave violations against children. In order to do so, Watchlist will continue to build partnerships among NGOs, research institutions, and private sector companies working on the technology side, and UN agencies, human rights organizations, NGOs, and researchers who have an interest in improving the monitoring and reporting on violations.



Monitoring and Evaluation:

In this strategic period, three Annual Activity Plans will be produced. Progress on their implementation will be assessed monthly and quarterly evaluations undertaken by Watchlist's Advisory Board and Staff will allow for mid-course adjustments. Annual Reports detail Watchlist's activities, outcomes and impact, and include a financial report. On the programmatic side, each Field Monitor has an advocacy strategy and is accompanied by a rigorous impact assessment. Each advocacy initiative is also equipped with a detailed strategy document which mandates the monitoring and evaluation of all activities, including the associated institutional learning. Finally, all of Watchlist's partnership projects have progress reports and impact evaluations.