

Daring transformation - for an earth of humanity

The position of terre des hommes Deutschland e.V.

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Daring transformation

Together with children and young people for a just world

Preamble

Under the title "Daring transformation: working together with children and young people for a just world", the child rights organization terre des hommes Deutschland e. V. 2023 is presenting a new policy paper that serves to analyze and define positions in a world of global change and increasing ecological, economic, and social crises. It replaces the "Development Policy Position Paper" adopted in 2003 and, like the latter, was developed in a joint process involving all actors who support the work of terre des hommes. Project partners of terre des hommes all over the world, members of the association in Germany and full-time employees have contributed to the project.

In the two decades between the two position papers, the reality of life for many children and young people around the world has improved in some areas at local, national, and global level. But still the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child of the UN is only implemented to a very limited extent worldwide. Too many children and young people are still denied access to their rights. Such violations of children's rights are caused on the one hand by the prevailing economic and political conditions, and on the other hand by spreading crises such as wars that violate international law, advancing climate change, biodiversity loss and the consequences of the Covid19 pandemic.

The negative sides of globalization have become even more apparent, especially in the global North. Health protection, food security, stable supply chains and crisis prevention can no longer be dismissed as the "challenge of others" but also affect the countries of the North in a very concrete way. terre des hommes recognized this as early as the 1990s and advocated for a "development policy for the North".

At the same time, the discourse around the concept of development has changed fundamentally over the last twenty years. Increasingly, the conceptual approach of development policy of the past decades is being questioned - especially by actors from the global South. Central questions that determine the discourse today are: "Who is developing specifically (individually, collectively, regionally, nationally, or globally) and in what direction?" "Who defines what, "development" means and which "development goals" are worth striving for.

The global transformation processes are important and urgent. There is no doubt that they will demand a lot from all of us - in the Global North as well as in the Global South - both emotionally and in our thinking, in our everyday actions and economically. In the Global North as well as in the Global South, this affects the elites who profit from the prevailing framework conditions as well as the underprivileged who must struggle particularly hard with the negative consequences of economic globalization. It is therefore even more important to address the necessary transformation processes, their visions, and tasks not only individually, but also together and as terre des hommes. terre des hommes and its partners are in the fortunate position of being able to combine academic approaches with profound local knowledge and experience from practical project work.

Comprehensive transformation requires activities at all levels - from the local to the global level. The primary task of a child rights organization in this context is to bring about fundamental and comprehensive change in destructive and discriminatory structures and thus combat the causes of crises and thus child rights violations, rather than just their symptoms. The aim is to enable children and young people to fully realize their rights today and in the future.

As the result of a comprehensive process of reflection and discussion, this position paper "Daring Transformation: With Children and Young People for a Just World" sheds light on how terre des hommes as an organization can contribute to this transformation at various levels of impact. The position paper was adopted on xxxx by the General Assembly, the highest body of terre des hommes Germany.

I. About the situation of children's rights worldwide

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) forms the framework of terre des hommes' work. *"The starting point and basis of all terre des hommes' activities are the inviolable dignity of the child and the special human rights of children laid down in the Convention on the Rights of the Child"*¹

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child highlights three basic principles that are also reflected in our activities: Protection, Provision and Participation. In addition, the CRC emphasizes that all children and adolescents have the right to grow up in a healthy and non-violent environment in which they are promoted without discrimination and can develop their abilities without hindrance.

But the reality is different, and the rights of children and young people are being disregarded around the world. Millions of children and young people are oppressed and discriminated against in many ways. They

- suffer from hunger and multidimensional poverty and lack access to adequate health care and quality education (violation CRC Art. 24 & 28),
- are discriminated against, for example, on the basis of origin, gender, socio-economic status, religious or political beliefs, or disabilities (violation CRC Art. 2),
- are exploited as child laborers (violation of CRC Art. 32),
- experience domestic violence - physical, psychological and sexualized (violation of CRC Art. 19 & 34),
- are injured, killed, abducted or raped in violent conflicts or recruited as child soldiers (violation of CRC Art. 38).

In addition, environmental damage threatens the health, lives and futures of children and young people. Antidemocratic and repressive regimes fascinate more and more people with simple answers to complex challenges, stir up fears and prejudices, defame and discriminate.

Children's rights as a guideline

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is a decisive guideline for the activities of terre des hommes

¹ terre des hommes (2013). What guides us, page 2.

The activities of terre des hommes reflect all three basic principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child: Protection, Provision and Participation.

However, we are still far from the goal of comprehensively realizing children's rights for all children worldwide.

II. The global economic imbalance prevents the implementation of children's rights.

The unequal power structures between the global North and the global South that shape the system and structures of international cooperation are also reflected in the global economic system. In the industrialized countries of the global North, in East Asia, in the BRICS² states and in many other countries, the economic system, regardless of all differences, is based on the compulsion for permanent growth of the gross domestic product and on extensive consumption. It is increasingly spreading to all regions of the world and subordinating all areas of life to economic interests. Regardless of whether private capitalist or state capitalist, intra- and intergenerational inequalities are emerging in the burden of the ecological and social costs of global economic activity. It has always been societies in the global South that have been confronted with the negative effects; in the future, it will also be the coming generations in the global North. This way of life of many people in the Global North, the favored elites, and the middle classes worldwide and increasingly especially in the BRICS countries massively endangers the Ecological Integrity and is critically called "imperial way of life" in the so-called post-growth discussion.

It is becoming increasingly evident that this way of doing business and living has reached its limits, is increasingly resulting in violations of children's rights, and is leading to irreversible destruction of the livelihoods of current and future generations.

These injustices and threats cannot be remedied with humanitarian aid and governmental "development aid". What is needed is a comprehensive transformation of the prevailing economic system and the associated way of life.

Whoever wants to realize children's rights must question the system.

The prevailing economic system prevents the enforcement of children's rights and destroys the livelihoods of current and future generations.

Humanitarian aid and traditional support approaches will not be able to address these injustices and threats.

III. International development policy under criticism

The globally dominant economic system and with it the unequal power structures between the global North and the global South also shape the structures of international "cooperation" into the 21st century. Because the various approaches to development policy have been able to change little in this respect, they have been called into question early on, but especially since the late

²The abbreviation "BRICS" stands for the initial letters of the five countries Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.

1980s by movements such as "Post-Development" or "Beyond-Aid". The central points of criticism were and are that

- unequal power structures once created by colonialism became entrenched in donor-recipient relationships,
- development activities are defined by external actors from the global North (governments, international institutions, international NGOs, etc.), often overlooking real, local needs and problems,
- local approaches, values, and norms are dismissed as inferior and are reshaped and replaced by uniform values of those who see themselves as developed,
- the diversity of civil society is not given adequate attention and thus the diversity of potential solutions remains unused,
- dependencies are reproduced or created that benefit actors from the global North, but do not result in structural changes that could trigger genuine transformation processes and thus an improvement in living conditions for the whole global population.

At least the insight that development policy must be based on partnership relations has spread. But the supposed progress is superficial: Structures that have evolved over decades, as well as economic interests, show considerable persistence³. In the international institutions, including the development banks, procedures have evolved that on the one hand allow criticism and dissent, but at the same time neutralize them, so that it has remained "business as usual."⁴

In addition to the state actors already mentioned and others such as Russia and China, other actors have emerged in recent decades, some of which provide substantial financial resources and have a massive influence on local civil society. In particular, the role of the major internationally active philanthropic foundations⁵ must be viewed critically in this context.

In response to the world's worsening ecological problems, the UN adopted the 2030 Agenda in 2015 and revived the magic word "sustainable development". (The 1987 Brundtland Report already works with the term "sustainable development," as did the 1992 Rio Conference.) At the heart of the 2030 Agenda are the 17 Sustainable Development Goals, which no longer apply only to the countries of the Global South, but also include the countries of the Global North in the call for transformation.

Although the 2030 Agenda offers a variety of starting points for advancing the implementation of children's rights, it does not set a focus here. On the other hand, it adheres to the gross national product or gross domestic product (GDP) as an indicator, although this is purely quantitative and refers exclusively to material values. On the question of how global growth - and in particular substantial growth in the Global South - can be achieved "without further deteriorating the ecological framework (...), the SDGs still owe the answer⁶

³ APuZ No. 43-45, 2018

⁴ Felix Anderl, Development as Motive and Resistance, in Periphery No. 150/51, 2018, p. 219.

⁵ Thomas Gebauer/Ilija Trojanow, Ways out of the Global Crisis. Help? Help! Fischer, 2018

Although growth is supposed to be "sustainable," it was left as an indicator "with the conventional measure of gross national product per capita." It is evident that in the 2030 Agenda, governments have not overcome the problematic orientation toward quantitative economic growth and disregard external (ecological) effects and distributional issues.⁷

New technologies could lead to economic growth while maintaining or even reduce resource consumption and thus also to qualitative, "green" growth. However, it is doubtful whether continued purely quantitative - even "green" - growth, especially in the countries of the global North, is compatible with a sustainable global transformation.

 / The previous **"development aid" is not an appropriate approach.**

The donor-recipient relationships of international cooperation solidify power structures.

Development goals are mostly not defined locally.

Local needs are easily overlooked. Local approaches, values and norms are dismissed as inferior, and civic diversity is negated.

Structures that have grown over decades, as well as economic interests, show considerable persistence.

New state and private actors are exerting influence on civil society, in some cases with large financial resources.

IV. Need for a comprehensive transformation

To implement children's rights globally and sustainably, a comprehensive transformation is necessary, which must change both the societal level and the way of doing business, as well as the understanding of "development" and the own role of all actors on a local and global level. However, this transformation is prevented by classical "development aid." Thus, the question arises for an alternative concept of development that is truly sustainable.

What alternative theoretical and practical approaches already exist? How do they differ from our current (destructive) model of growth and prosperity?

The 2030 Agenda also calls for cooperation between the Global North and the Global South on an equal footing, which implies a certain redistribution of power and resources from the Global North to the Global South. Similarly, post-development and beyond aid advocates call for localization approaches and partnership between actors from the Global South and the Global North.

"Localization" in this context means promoting local ownership, decision-making power, and self-determination. Conversely, international

⁶ Martens/Obenland, The 2030 Agenda, Global Future Goals for Sustainable Development, Bonn, Osnabrück, 2015, p.69).

⁷ (Martens/Obenland, Agenda 2030. Where does the world stand, Bonn, 2020, p.109).

non-governmental organizations and their employees must no longer act as experts, but as bridge-builders and international partners who enable the implementation of local solutions. International institutions such as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank must also show more willingness to adopt a partnership approach and promote local approaches.

Such a change in approach would have immense consequences for international cooperation, which would have to be shaped jointly by states or organizations from the global South and the global North. The necessity to think in a new and equal way⁸ has not yet been properly understood by the actors of state development policy, but also by some international NGOs

From "development aid" to "transformation partnership"

A real transformation and thus an improvement of living conditions is prevented by classical "development aid".

Instead, partnership and strict localization are required - combined with ownership by local actors to promote decision-making power and self-determination.

Overcoming the growth constraint: growing differently

In view of the global social and ecological dislocations caused by the prevailing growth model, the question of alternative development concepts and practices arises: What trend-setting approaches to overcoming the destructive growth compulsion already exist?

Degrowth/post-growth movement

This movement advocates a social-ecological transformation of society in the industrialized countries of the North. It calls for selective growth in sustainable, social, and ecological sectors for these countries. At the same time, economic output in sectors with a high turnover of material, energy and emissions is to be radically reduced by transforming production and consumption. This is the only way to end their destructive impact on people and nature. Parts of the post-growth movement also reject "green" growth because of the environmentally harmful "rebound effects" associated with it. Instead, it argues that a system change to a radically sufficiency-oriented¹⁰ economy is necessary to achieve the post-growth goals: global ecological and social justice, self-determination and a good life, and growth independence.

Degrowth/post-growth is an umbrella term for a wide range of alternative concepts

⁸ Kornprobst et al. (2020): Postcolonialism & Post-Development. Practical perspectives for development cooperation.

⁹ *Financial rebound effect*: More efficient production makes goods cheaper, so demand grows and production increases. Other rebound effects: Niko Paech: Befreiung vom Überfluss. Munich 2014. p. 75 ff.

¹⁰ Sufficiency: Frugality. When less is produced and consumed, energy and material consumption is limited.

and practices from the North and South, all of which aim to change growth societies. Examples of alternative concepts include the *common good economy* and the *Living in solidarity*.¹¹

Alternative approaches in the global south

In various regions of the world, including the project regions of *terre des hommes*, there are other movements that resist the reproduction of unequal structures. They build on traditional and indigenous knowledge, on collective instead of individualistic goals, and above all on common intercultural learning. Moreover, they clearly distance themselves from growth thinking and the selfish, consumerist way of life. These approaches feed on sources as diverse as tradition, active pragmatism or intellectual discourse and are increasingly entering into international exchange. As examples, we would like to mention *Buen Vivir* (Andean region), *Radical Ecological Democracy* (South Asia) and *Ubuntu* (Southern Africa).

All three approaches clearly distance themselves from growth thinking and the egoistic, consumption-oriented way of life and reject a technical and purely utility-oriented relationship to the earth, to life, to "nature". They are based on their own spirituality and -especially *Buen Vivir*- on their own idea of "nature". They adopt ideas from traditional Indian, African, and indigenous cultures and emphasize political-social principles such as solidarity, community, cooperation, respect for others, self-restraint, etc. Thus, there are clear links to the post-growth discussion in the global North - e.g. to the concept of a solidary way of life. A holistic orientation of the mentioned approaches prohibits the isolated consideration of single points. Nevertheless, these approaches can provide important impulses, for example, when it comes to rethinking our utility-oriented relationship to the earth, to life, to "nature".

However, it must be noted that in the political discourse of the three concepts, children's rights are not directly considered. However, in all regions, partner organizations and youth networks of *terre des hommes*, which are oriented towards these concepts, vehemently advocate for a stronger consideration of children's rights, for more participation and empowerment of children and young people.

What indications do the presented approaches give for an alternative development?

What positive impulses do they contain? What can they contribute to an understanding of development beyond the prevailing growth model? - Many interesting details - but also the recognition that there is no one "blueprint" for Alternative Development. about regionally adapted solutions, which offer insights into the principles of sustainable alternative development.

Beyond all the differences that exist between the concepts from the Global South and the Western post-growth discussion, seven "core elements" can be derived that can serve as signposts for a fundamentally different understanding of "development" to enable children to live a decent life today and in the future.

¹¹S. a. *Solidarity-based living and the common good economy* in UTAG's Basic Reader II: Chap. III.2 and III.3.

Where should the transformation journey go?

There are various approaches to transformation that draw on sources as diverse as tradition, active pragmatism, or intellectual discourse. They originate from different regions in the global North and global South but are increasingly entering into international exchange.

"The one "blueprint" for Alternative Development does not exist.

However, across all differences, seven "core elements" can be identified and identified, which are outlined below.

V. Core elements of a comprehensive transformation

The seven core elements outlined below are basic prerequisites for realizing children's and human rights and describe the framework within which the global transformation must be advanced through partnership-based, international cooperation beyond mainstream development thinking. At the same time, they are markers and means to guide the process of change. In this process, children's rights and human rights must be the normative basis for all action.

1. Ecological integrity and intergenerational justice

The resilience of the Earth's ecosystem, the natural cycles as well as biological diversity are existential prerequisites for all life and must be preserved.

Negative human interventions must be minimized or compensated. "Nature" is not only the basis of life for us humans, but also has its own value and must be protected accordingly.

To ensure that existing ecological resources are preserved for future generations, internationally and nationally binding rules for the protection of species and the environment must be expanded and standardized. The yardstick for all political and economic action must be ecological integrity and thus the right to a healthy and intact environment for future generations.

2. Economic justice

All people must be able to satisfy their basic needs and develop their abilities and potentials in accordance with the dignity equal to all human beings. Without economic justice, children's rights and human rights cannot be realized.

However, today's economic, social, and political conditions lead to global and local inequalities. Economic and trade relations must therefore be developed into fair partnerships to change the prevailing unequal economic opportunity structure.

3. Gender Equity

Just societies are not possible without a comprehensive realization of gender equality. It must be considered that different forms of discrimination, such as age, origin, class, and sexual orientation, intersect (intersectionality) overlap.

Gender equality must not only be established by law for all areas of society but must also be enforced in practice in a binding manner. Fundamental to this is emancipatory education with the goal of self-determination and self-efficacy.

4. Democratization, participation, and responsibility

Every person - regardless of age, gender, ethnic and cultural origin, and socio-economic background - as well as every community - must have the right and the opportunity to participate substantially in all important decisions affecting their lives. This requires an institutionally secured participatory democracy as well as a strong civil society. This requires self-confident and critical individuals who network and take responsibility for the common good.

5. Solidarity and cooperation (conviviality)

Cooperative and solidarity-based thinking, management and action should be rediscovered (commoning) and creatively promoted with a view to the common good. In this way, a counterbalance to the economically induced processes of de-solidarization can be created. By valuing social relationships, successful coexistence (conviviality) can be promoted

6. Cultural diversity and learning from each other

A world worth living in will only be realized if there is a tolerant exchange in every society and between cultures. Political decisions must be made with respect.

The aim is to ensure that the process of development is carried out with due regard for the diversity of lifestyles, philosophies of life, values, and communities of all groups, including underprivileged groups, and that it is institutionally safeguarded. The framework for this is set by children's and human rights and human dignity. A critically considered examination of traditions and practices within the framework outlined here is necessary for this.

7. Resilience

All civil society actors involved need resilience to achieve sustainable goals in social transformation processes in the face of resistance and blockades. Building on stable social relationships, personal resilience is strengthened, among other things, through positive self-perception, problem-oriented solution strategies and experiences of self-efficacy.

These core elements are clearly related to children's and human rights, and some of them are already practiced in terre des hommes projects. There are also similarities with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda: For example, the core elements Ecological Integrity and Gender Equality can be found in Goals 5, 13, 14 and 15, the core element Democratization, Participation, Responsibility fits in with Goal 16

"Peaceful and Inclusive Societies. The tension between SDG 8

"sustainable economic growth" and the core elements of ecological integrity and intergenerational justice have already been referred to above. Quantitative growth with a steady increase in overall economic production and growth in gross domestic product must be replaced by selective qualitative growth aimed at improving the quality of life through social, economic, and ecological justice. The seven core elements mentioned above point the way in this direction. They aim at a sustainable global change and therefore provide a suitable (orientation) framework for a global sustainability transformation. The individual core elements are deliberately not seen as isolated, possibly delegable individual issues, but rather as a conceptual overall approach.

The core elements of transformation as a conceptual approach

The seven core elements of "Ecological Integrity and Generational Justice", "Economic Justice", "Gender equity, democratization, participation and accountability", "Solidarity and Cooperation (Conviviality)", "Cultural Diversity," "Learning from Each Other," and "Resilience" are conceptual cornerstones for global sustainability transformation.

The core elements have clear references to children's and human rights.

They do not see themselves as isolated individual topics that can be delegated, if necessary, but rather as a conceptual approach.

VI. On the way to sustainable international cooperation

1. Partnership instead of aid

Instead of "development aid", "cooperation in partnership" between actors from the global South and the global North is now on the agenda. The equal cooperation between civil society organizations from the global North and the global South are a first step towards alternatives.

410 However, they only make sense if they focus on human and children's rights and on social and ecological justice and support local approaches to solutions. This also includes taking into account the perspective of children and young people. What is needed is a cultural exchange at eye level – no culture should want to dominate another. Rather, it is about a global transformation that enables all people to live in dignity and justice and does not destroy the foundations of life. For this, coalitions, networks of collectives and autonomous communities must be built in the global North and South.

2. The importance of civil society

To advance the socioeconomic transformation, a different orientation of state and international politics as well as the economy is required. Above all, robust civil societies are needed to initiate the necessary changes and implement them democratically.

Civil societies must be guided by democratic values, human rights and secure (including traditional) knowledge. They must demand and actively use freedom of opinion, information, and assembly from the state.

They must create spaces to deal with fears, uncertainties, and complex contexts. Civil societies must also mediate in local ethnic and religious conflicts, from which in particular children suffer. This is the only way to discuss differing views objectively and avoid framing, anti-democratic reflexes and calls for leaders to bring salvation. Civil societies must be strong to distinguish interest-driven falsehoods from fact-based findings.

At the same time, civil societies must act as a stimulus and corrective vis-à-vis states and business, so that respect for elementary fundamental rights and services of general interest (once again) become core state tasks, so that trade and economic policy dismantles structurally unjust economic relations and establishes transparent, fair rules between states.

Ultimately, the transformation must be agreed upon and made binding by political actors at the international level.

3. Defending democratic values against populism and "shrinking spaces"

Around the world, anti-democratic movements and parties are fascinating more and more people with their simple answers to complex challenges. Demagogues stir up fears and prejudices, defame and discriminate against minorities. Democratic civil society movements therefore face the task of countering these growing anti-human rights currents.

Unfortunately, the scope of action for human rights-oriented civil society groups is becoming increasingly restricted worldwide¹². These "shrinking spaces" exist not only in authoritarian-ruled countries, but increasingly also in established democracies. In the fight against state repression, development policy organizations such as terre des hommes and its partner organizations must network regionally and globally in order to work in solidarity and effectively at the political and legal level to protect civil society spaces for action.

¹² VERO (ed.): Strengthening Civil Society Spaces of Action Worldwide - Recommendations to the Federal Government and the Bundestag, May 2022. 5 p.

(https://venro.org/fileadmin/user_upload/Dateien/Daten/Publikationen/Stellungnahmen/VENRO_Stellungnahme_Shrinking_Spaces_2022.pdf - (last accessed: 10.07.2022)).

☞ Transformation needs a strong civil society and spaces for action

To advance the necessary socio-economic transformation, a different orientation of state and international politics as well as the economy is needed. Services of general interest must (once again) become the core task of the state.

Robust democratic civil societies are also indispensable. Unfortunately, the room for maneuver for human rights-oriented civil society groups is becoming increasingly limited worldwide.

Regional and global networking are gaining in importance when it comes to protecting civil society spaces for action.

VIII. The terre des hommes approach

Terre des hommes empowers children and young people and, together with them, initiates changes locally and globally. The aim is to overcome destructive and discriminatory structures, institutions and value systems that stand in the way of implementing children's rights. Only a comprehensive transformation can remedy the symptoms of grievances and crises such as climate change, child labor and war in the long term.

Terre des hommes will embed the activities aimed at a comprehensive global transformation in an "impact-oriented overall concept" that maps the program work at terre des hommes.

- At the "actor level (micro level)", individual project measures bring about significant improvements for some children and young people,
- At the "network level (meso level)" we contribute together with children, youth, and partner organizations to create and strengthen institutions and networks that work for the implementation of children's and human rights,
- At the "systemic change level (macro level)," advocacy work at the local, national, and global levels achieves social change and initiates transformations,
- On the "level of social change (meta-level)", terre des hommes thus makes a significant contribution to the shaping, enforcement, and observance of children's rights and to the access of all children and young people to these rights. Against this backdrop, this paper reflects on the key positions and roles necessary for broad impact at the meta-level. This includes critically reflecting on our own understanding of our work with children, youth, and partner organizations, and embedding our actions in the challenging global context of the 21st century.

IX. Conclusions

Even if the conception of alternative economic approaches is not one of terre des hommes' statutory tasks, we must actively engage in alternative approaches.

After all, the reality of life and the future prospects of millions of children and young people are massively threatened by the effects of the prevailing economic and lifestyle patterns.

The mission statement of terre des hommes "What we stand for" adopted by the general assembly in 2018 states unequivocally: "terre des hommes is committed to the social transformation towards socially just, ecological and economic sustainability in countries of the North as well as the South. We advocate fair trade relations and production conditions based on partnership. Together with allied organizations, terre des hommes works in Germany and Europe to ensure that not only development policy, but also our lifestyles, economic and trade policies, and strategic interests are shaped with a view to achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals."

Furthermore, it is the task of all actors at terre des hommes to rethink, to question and overcome learned patterns and structures. Beyond the familiar patterns of development policy, terre des hommes can thus fight alongside children and young people worldwide for their rights and support its partner organizations in actively and constructively contributing to building a strong, inclusive civil society.

1. Guiding principles

How terre des hommes works

- ***Core elements permeate project, advocacy, and information work:***
Terre des hommes follows a specific approach in its work, the core principles of which characterize the classic "children's rights triad" of project work, advocacy work and information work and place the participation of children and young people and the inclusion of local solutions at the center of its actions. Advocacy and lobbying vis-à-vis politically relevant actors, but also vis-à-vis the (national and international) private sector, is a crucial tool to drive the necessary structural change.
The actions of terre des hommes are always based on scientific facts, democratic principles and children's and human rights.
- **Child rights-based approach**
Terre des hommes pursues the goal of sustainably combating the causes of child rights violations together with children and young people at various levels of impact. The basis of all actions, are the welfare and interests of children and adolescents as well as the basic principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child: protection, provision and participation. At terre des hommes, the aspect of participation is central. Children and young people must be involved in political decisions to a greater extent than they have been in the past. This requires binding regulations. Ideally, we initiate steps for change together with children and young people to dismantle destructive and discriminatory structures.

- **Coherent approach:**

Terre des hommes has limited resources. To be effective in its actions, it must focus its work. Public relations and advocacy work must therefore be linked to the strategic goals of international program work and international campaigns to form a coherent whole.

Cooperation with partners

- **Promoting local partners, supporting local solutions:** Terre des hommes has been committed to partnership and localization approaches for many years and aligns its project activities accordingly.

In an active exchange with partner organizations, youth networks and other actors, Terre des hommes identifies concrete problems that negatively affect the rights of children and young people. Together, these actors develop appropriate local solutions to the local challenges. The alternative development models and strategies discussed can provide inspiration for these local solutions.

- **Appreciation and communication:** The local approaches must be appreciated, continuously developed transparently and on an equal footing with the partner organizations. This attitude of terre des hommes is held in high esteem, which must also be reflected in internal and external communication.
- **Cooperation goes beyond project work:** Terre des hommes supports partner organizations in working against destructive social structures and for equal participation of all and an inclusive civil society in a comprehensive sense. terre des hommes also implements these efforts internally; full-time employees are called upon to do so, as are the members.

Moving forward together

- **Learning Organization:**

As a "learning organization", Terre des hommes wants to be a place of exchange between volunteers, staff and project partners. Terre des hommes will discuss the need for sustainable global change, possible solutions and alternative approaches broadly - in the association, with the main volunteers and on the partner platforms. Other actors from science and practice from the respective region, but also across regions, are to be included. The aim of such discussions is to reach an agreement on the necessary political, economic, and social framework conditions as well as the programmatic consequences for tdh and its project partners.

- **Further develop exchange and participation:**

The formats of exchange and participation - such as the delegates' conference, the partner platforms, or the international youth network - are continuously developed together.

- **Diversity as a challenge and an opportunity:**
Terre des hommes recognizes the heterogeneity of the actors from full-time staff, membership and partners and understands them not as contrary, but as complementary. This diversity is an opportunity. Terre des hommes will deal transparently with different roles, structural limitations, and conflicting goals.

580 Acting in alliances

- **Bringing strengths to the alliance's work:**
Terre des hommes cannot achieve many of its goals alone but must act in an internationally networked structure with its established multilateral partner network, other member organizations of the international terre des hommes federation, and in alliances with other national and international non-governmental organizations. Terre des hommes can act as a bridge between academic discourse and practical steps towards a sustainable future on the ground. This strength must be further developed.

2. Fields of action

Protection and empowerment of young people

Current emergency, war and crisis situations violate children's and human rights in many regions of the world. They are increasingly forcing terre des hommes and its partner organizations to work above all for the basic provision of children, young people, and their families in terms of health, nutrition, housing and protection against violence.

The aim is to make young people strong in a comprehensive sense (socially, psychologically, economically) and to give them the opportunities and a safe space to empower themselves so that they can assert the rights to which they are entitled. An essential prerequisite for this is a comprehensive basic education, which must be promoted.

Preserving civil society space

600 On the basis of the child rights-based approach, terre des hommes will work together with children, young people and partner organizations to counteract violations of children's rights. As part of the democratic civil society, we will oppose anti-democratic and anti-human rights currents and so-called shrinking spaces¹³. Together with partner organizations, we will actively and constructively participate in building a strong, inclusive civil society.

Resilience promotion

605 Climate change and biodiversity loss have already led to changes that cannot realistically be reversed in the foreseeable future. Local and time-limited crisis situations are increasingly geographically and temporally de-limited. Appropriate strategies are therefore needed to minimize the impact of these unavoidable changes on people living today and future generations,

¹³ VENRO (2022): Strengthening Civil Society Spaces of Action Worldwide - Recommendations to the Federal Government and the Bundestag.

for example, through measures to adapt land use. This is a challenge for local communities as well as for state structures and the international community.

Terre des hommes therefore advocates for climate justice, ecological integrity, intergenerational justice, and economic and social justice. These aspects must find stronger influence in the human and children's rights processes, but also in all other political decisions.

So far, terre des hommes has not yet been able to draw on conventions that are binding under international law. Instead, it must first help to win over socio-political majorities for a fundamental change in the global economy and way of life and for corresponding legal and international legal standards.

Terre des hommes will address the issues of sustainability and promoting resilience and resistance¹⁴ to unstoppable environmental degradation in its project, campaign and public relations work in Germany, the EU and in the project countries, and will work to put it on the international agenda.

Advancing the socio-ecological transformation

Especially in times in which project partners are increasingly forced to first secure basic services in the areas of health, nutrition, education, housing and protection from violence, terre des hommes is challenged to work for the elimination of the causes of need and violence and for a sustainable, viable world. The goal of a good life for all people can only succeed with a global sustainability transformation.

terre des hommes will therefore strengthen projects and project components that develop and test elements of an alternative way of life, i.e. one that is sustainable in the future, and that can advance global change.

Whenever a project is approved, terre des hommes will therefore examine what contribution the project can make in the specific local situation to sustainable global change and to alternative forms of living and economic activity that will also be viable in the future.

The necessary transformation processes require strong civil societies. To achieve this, people need to acquire new ways of thinking that focus on the common good and practice the ability to help shape processes of social change, including children and young people. Terre des hommes will encourage and enable its partner organizations to take an active and constructive role in their environment in order to participate in building a strong, inclusive civil society in the project itself but also beyond.

Education is an essential prerequisite for change. In addition to comprehensive basic education, transformative education plays a key role. This critical, emancipatory approach to education aims beyond imparting sustainability knowledge to individual changes in attitude and behavior. The development education work of terre des hommes in Germany and the projects supported by terre des hommes are intended to contribute to transformative education and thus to strengthening sustainable action. In particular, they should provide young people with experiences of their own self-efficacy, which motivate them to act as multipliers and to work as "change agents" for global change.

¹⁴The term "resilience" is used here exclusively in a technical-scientific sense

The transformation sought is designed to address unequal power and decision-making structures, including, for example, global neo-colonial patterns, national patriarchal structures, or individual gender-based discrimination.

Accordingly, the global economy, which in its current form causes or fosters violations of children's rights, and the reproduction of power asymmetries and dependencies through international cooperation are starting points for transformation.

The comprehensive transformation must not remain an abstract future goal that can simply be achieved by flipping some imaginary lever. Rather, despite all the inherent conflicts of objectives, the global transformation must be tackled swiftly in small and large steps in Germany, the EU and the project countries, placed on the international agenda and made irreversible.

Becoming better - acting together

Terre des hommes follows a specific approach in its work, whose seven core elements permeate the classic "children's rights triad" of project work, advocacy, and information work.

For many years, terre des hommes has been pursuing partnership and localization approaches that other actors have yet to discover for themselves. In addition, terre des hommes has structures for dialogue and participation.

Terre des hommes sees itself as a learning organization, which critically examines its own work, but also relies on feedback from its partners. Where there is need for improvement, terre des hommes will adapt its approaches. Proven approaches must be more strongly appreciated and communicated.

Terre des hommes faces up to the challenges posed by the heterogeneity of the actors and understands this diversity as an opportunity.

Terre des hommes will deal transparently with different roles, structural limitations and conflicting goals.

Terre des hommes is aware that a comprehensive transformation can only succeed if all stakeholders make a concerted effort - an enormous challenge. The aim is to tackle global change in smaller and larger steps – at both national and international level.

