VISION
Children, as fully fledged human beings, must enjoy and exercise their rights -with dignity- in a just and responsible society

MISSION
Global action directed towards promoting and protecting children’s rights

PRIORITY
Justice for Children

INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT (IS or DCI-IS)
Location:
Geneva, Switzerland

Purpose:
To serve as the focal point for the Defence for Children International (DCI) movement at the international level, providing an invaluable link between national sections and the UN
WHO WE ARE

Defence for Children International (DCI) is an independent grassroots and rights-based non-governmental organisation (NGO) that promotes and protects children’s rights on a global, regional, national and local level. DCI is one of the leading NGOs with regard to issues of juvenile justice with on the ground presence in five continents: 47 national sections and an International Secretariat (Geneva). It is one of few international organizations to truly put Southern and Northern institutions on equal footing - and in equal partnership. Founded in 1979 – the first International Year of the Child, DCI was one of the drafters of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Currently, the organization holds consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), UNICEF, UNESCO and the Council of Europe (CoE).

BEHIND THE STRATEGY...

Although the 1989 UNCRC and other international instruments contain special provisions on children’s access to and treatment in justice, worldwide, justice systems do not cater to the specific needs of children and are still predominantly adult-oriented. Globally, many children are largely denied their right to access to justice.

For many years DCI, on both a global level and through its national sections, has operated in the field of juvenile justice, trying to respond with advocacy, research and lobby actions, as well as direct intervention.

The International General Assembly (IGA), held on the 10th and 11th of March 2012 in Geneva, constituted an important step forward in the redefinition of DCI’s strategy and plans for the future. The Strategy and Organizational Structure Working Group has worked to exchange ideas, defining and renewing DCI’s commitment to a common vision:

Make the situation of children involved with the law internationally known, placing children and justice on international, regional and national political agendas as a priority item and developing national child-friendly justice systems guided by the principles enshrined in the UNCRC and all other international, regional and national norms and standards.
Objective: Awareness raising, monitoring and reporting on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and justice for children international standards

HOW?

• Raising awareness through advocacy initiatives at different levels: position statements, press releases, newsletters, website, social media, thematic reports, round tables, conferences, and events
• Membership in key child rights networks: International NGO Council on Violence against Children, the NGO Group for the UNCRC, other Networks and INGOs groups, with the strategic support of an external Advisory Board of experts
• Strengthening the unity of the movement

RESULTS

• Greater social and political awareness and lobbying for action on child rights violations, and current issues in justice for children
• Mainstream justice for children in all relevant forums
• Highlight children’s rights work of national sections
• Follow-up to the UN Study on Violence against Children
• Follow-up to the recommendations of the UNCRC Committee
• Closer and improved coordination and facilitation of the international movement’s development and progress

IMPACT

Juvenile justice is high on the agenda of the UNCRC, the Human Rights Council and the UNODC Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice.

Child friendly justice has become central at international as well as regional level.

Many DCI sections work together to implement regional programmes about juvenile justice.
Objective: Advocating and Lobbying justice for children as a priority

HOW?

- Advocating and lobbying with the Human Rights Council (HRC), and its mechanisms, for inclusion of justice for children through meetings with OHCHR Special Procedure mandate holders, oral and written statements, alternative reports to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), etc.
- Follow-up to General Comment No.10 ("Children’s Rights in Juvenile Justice"), with the dissemination of basic and child-friendly versions of fact sheets
- Advocate and lobby at the UN in New York (NY), the European Union (EU) in Brussels, and at regional human rights bodies in Latin America, Africa, etc., through the establishment of focal points
- Engage in joint advocacy activities to enhance visibility of juvenile justice issues ex. Interagency Panel on Juvenile Justice (IPJJ), collaboration with the African Child Policy Forum (ACPF), etc.

RESULTS

- Assurance that justice for children issues are addressed during country visits and featured in the reports and recommendations of the main human rights bodies
- Mainstreaming the rights of the child in juvenile justice into the agenda and mechanisms of the HRC
- Greater awareness of children on their rights in the juvenile justice system
- Better information flow of the international standards and norms on juvenile justice for local actors
- Increased lobbying on justice for children at NY, EU, Council of Europe, and the African Union
- Higher visibility of national section’s work at different levels

IMPACT

March 2012 - HRC 19th Session held their Annual Full Day Meeting on ‘the Rights of the Child on Children’s Rights in the administration of justice’ as a result of lobbying carried out by DCI and other NGOs.

2009 - Present - DCI actively contributed to the resolutions of HRC and UN General Assembly on ‘the administration of justice, in particular juvenile justice.’
FACT SHEET #3

Objective: Promote child-friendly justice

HOW?

- Follow-up to the Kampala Conference (www.kampalaconference.info) through supporting the preparation of country and regional consultations, child consultations, and organising a ‘Kampala+4’ Conference
- Awareness-raising, research and monitoring on the most relevant and neglected child rights violations, particularly in the field of justice for children
- Building international public campaigns for a justice adapted to children at the global level
- Creating a child-friendly version of the Guidelines
- Drafting reports on thematic issues based on the movement’s interests and engagements on justice for children
- Gathering of the best case examples on child-friendly justice from national sections and regions

RESULTS

- Implementation of an holistic multidisciplinary and human rights based approach in dealing with children in contact with the law
- Influence on the political agenda of governments towards the adoption of child-friendly justice policies
- Improved understanding of a children’s rights when in contact with the justice system

IMPACT

17 November 2010 - Council of Europe (CoE) adopts “Guidelines on child-friendly justice”: a non-binding practical tool to assist European states in establishing justice systems responding to the specific needs of children, including contributions from DCI experts.

FACT SHEET#4

Objective: Improve the capacities of DCI national sections

HOW?

• Building the capacities of national sections and strengthening collaboration among the sections and the International Secretariat: training, technical assistance, supporting national sections and regions in information management, gathering and documenting, professional development, and promoting the exchange of good practices between sections and regions
• Reporting to the various human rights mechanisms of the UN
• Defining and drafting documents on key issues for the movement in order to be consistent, clear and create a common ground on justice for children (for example, DCI model for Socio-Legal Defence Centres)
• Pursuing new strategic partnerships (African Child Policy Forum (ACPF) and Child Helpline International, inter alia)
• Creating and organising annual events, for example the ‘Youth & Justice’ Award
• Advocating and lobbying on behalf of national sections by providing them international representation

RESULTS

• Existing national sections are strengthened and able to collaborate and exchange with the other sections worldwide
• United front for the movement to defend children’s rights globally in a coherent manner, wider regional representation, and greater support for the activities of national sections
• Strengthen the public promotion of child-friendly justice approach at the global level through the work of national sections

IMPACT

80% of DCI national sections report to the CRC Committee and the UPR.

3 regional programmes on justice for children have been established and implemented by DCI in Latin America, the Middle East, and Africa.

DCI experts are invited to international conferences, seminars, workshops to share their knowledge and experience.
The International Secretariat’s activities have been kindly supported by membership fees of the national sections, and the following organizations: ICCO/Kerk In Actie, The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Luxembourg, Loterie Romande, Solidarité Internationale, City of Geneva, Canton of Geneva, the State Chancellery of Geneva, Carlier Foundation of Belgium, Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), Oak Foundation, Paul Schiller Foundation, Oxfam Novib, and the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
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