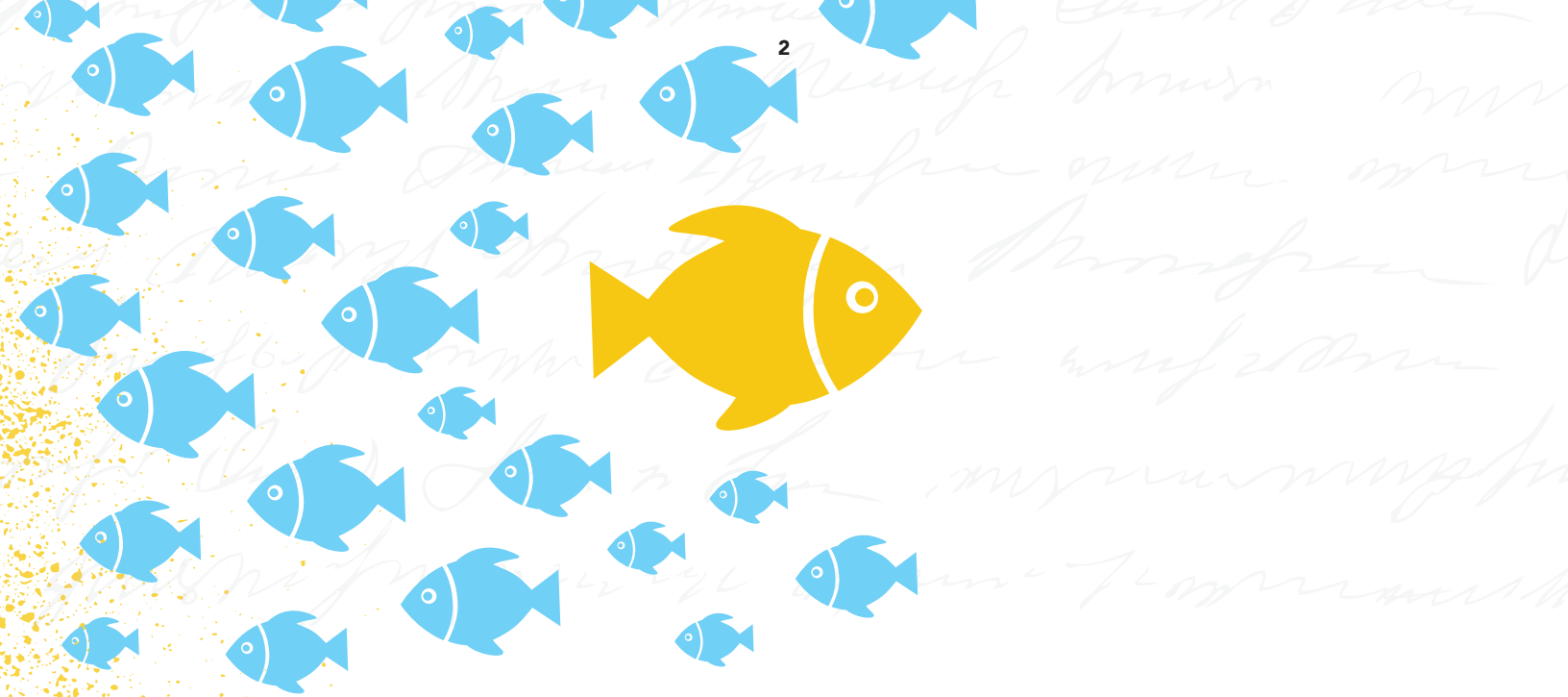




***RECOMMITTING TO CHILD RIGHTS
AND CHILD PROTECTION
IN A TURBULENT WORLD***





A MOMENT TO REINVIGORATE A MOVEMENT— OR BUILD A NEW ONE

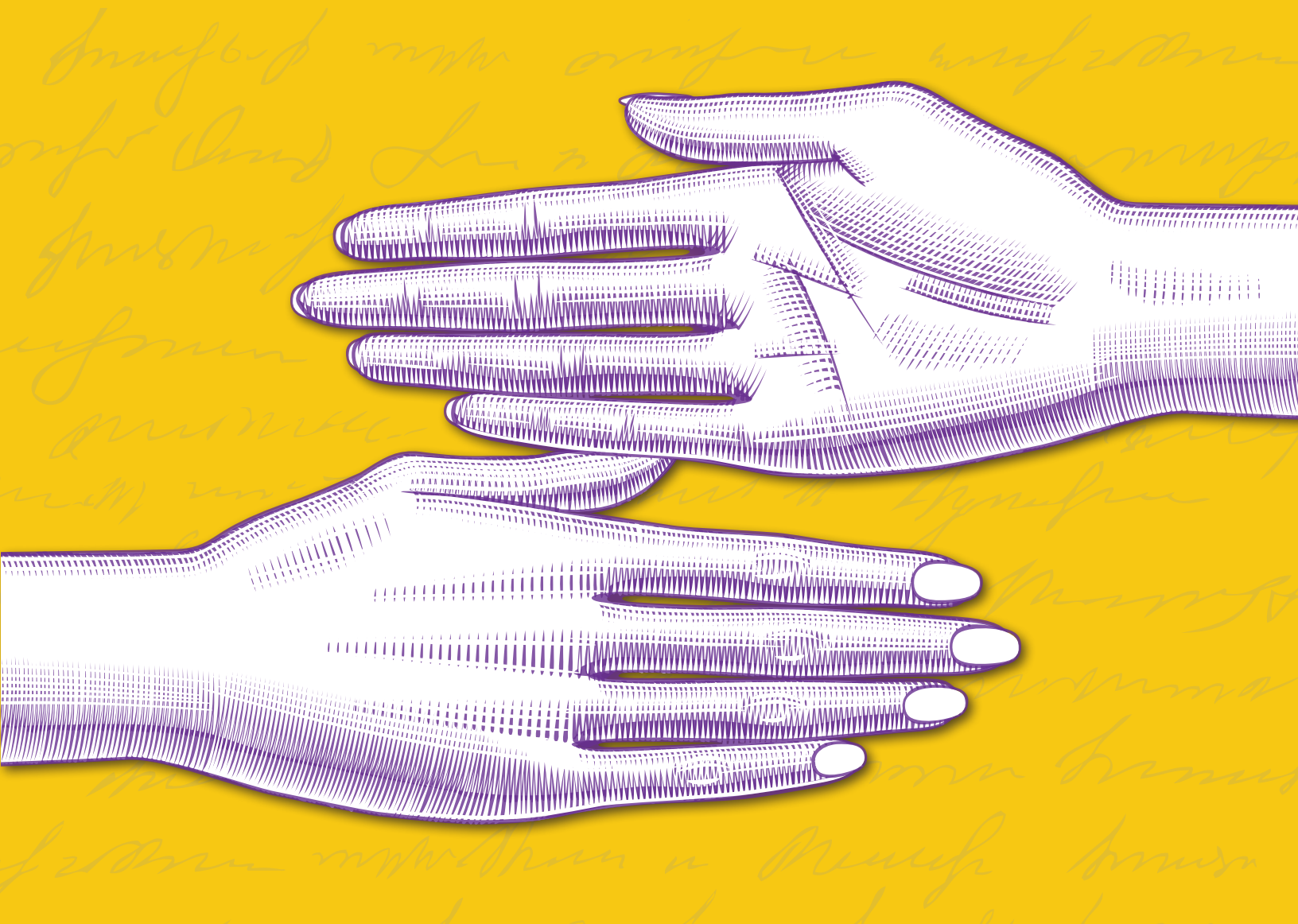
Next year will mark the 30th anniversary of the UN's Convention on the Rights of the Child. Major fanfare is in order: the world's most widely accepted and signed convention has also been a harbinger of major advances in some areas of child well-being. Primary school net enrolment in the developing world increased from 83 percent in 2000 to 91 percent in 2015. The under-five mortality rate decreased by 49% between 1990 and 2013. These advances point to significant progress, but the work of advocating fiercely for children's rights must remain a key human rights and sustainable development priority.

Improvements in children's health and access to quality education should in no way mean that child rights advocates rest on their laurels. To the contrary, the moment is ripe for child rights and child protection advocates to take stock of where we are, to gauge how far we have come, and to calibrate how our movement needs to adapt to new realities. Whatever progress occurs, we will always need a child rights movement—a movement that by its very nature will continuously self-generate new leadership. What should that movement look like—and focus on—in the current era? What role do we each want to play?

DANGER AND OPPORTUNITY: WHY CHILDREN'S RIGHTS REMAIN OF TREMENDOUS CONCERN

Never before has so much depended on the solemn guarantee to all children that we will uphold their dignity and create conditions in which they can claim their rights and pursue their dreams. It is our common responsibility.

Human society has entered a new period of intense social and economic transformation, upending many old patterns of family, community, national, and international life. There are more children and youth in the world today than ever before in human history. They survive to age five at greater rates than ever before, but they also make up fully half of the approximately 1 billion people living on \$2 a day or less in our increasingly unequal world. Are children and youth equipped to navigate this period of turmoil?



DANGERS

There is global economic growth but also widening inequality. Ongoing deep-rooted poverty remains intractable in many areas.

Migration and displacement are at their highest rates in recorded history, at least since the second World War.

Conflict is not abating but rather taking new forms that include increasing targeting of civilians and sporadic violence that can strike anywhere.

Endemic violence against children in multiple forms affects huge numbers of children in every setting in the world.

Large-scale industrialization and urbanization is underway across many parts of the lower-income world with impacts on the health of the environment and climate change.

Large-scale upheaval of extended family, kinship, and social networks that have served as the cradle of child-rearing and development for many centuries is occurring in tandem with many of these social and environmental changes.

The new dangers of the massive social media monopolies that shape thinking, discourse, and commerce in our world have made growing up, defining one's views, and claiming agency more complicated processes infused with emerging risks.

The naked disregard of human rights values—rooted in deep drivers like racism, patriarchy, and xenophobic nationalism—is increasingly being sanctioned publicly rather than being kept hidden. It is increasingly acceptable to attack human rights, including children's human rights.

OPPORTUNITIES

There is unprecedented access to information about and connections across the world, especially for young people, fueling a new revolution of rising expectations. Strategies for organizing can be updated in the blink of an eye.

The consolidation of existing and availability of new scientific knowledge helps us to more deeply understand the biology and social science of brain health and child development.

Deeper awareness of the powerful influence of early care on healthy child development should help us to maximize human capacity across the lifespan.

Strong macro-economic evidence of the returns on investment in early childhood development help to make the fiscal case for investing in children.

There is growing awareness of the importance of social and economic inclusion of youth as a down payment on social stability and human capital formation.

***[CHILDREN] SHALL BE
BROUGHT UP IN A SPIRIT
OF UNDERSTANDING,
TOLERANCE, FRIENDSHIP
AMONG PEOPLES***

– UN DECLARATION OF THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD, 1989



AN INVITATION INTO A CONVERSATION

Recognizing the importance of this moment in time, the CPC Learning Network hosted a global meeting in 2017 with a small group of global thought leaders across a variety of disciplines—including human rights law and activism, public health, education, psychology, anthropology, sociology, and social work. Areas of topical expertise covered child rights, child protection, children affected by armed conflict, violence against children, violence against women and girls, psychosocial support, community child protection, social norms change, and others. In hosting this forum, our goal was to build a common story that child rights and child protection actors from settings around the globe believe summarizes the state of the child rights and child protection movements.

We also hoped to open space and beat a drum to invite many more people into an ongoing conversation about these movements and preferred futures for children in our evolving world. How could we strengthen and revitalize our collective work? Some key issues emerged as areas of potential creative growth and collective action.



CHILDREN'S RIGHTS



ENSURING CHILDREN'S RIGHTS REMAIN SITUATED IN A HUMAN RIGHTS AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

Children's rights are human rights, and their respect is fundamental to the achievement of sustainable development. This framing—which may seem obvious—must remain central in an era where increasing professionalization and specialization may drive further fragmentation of the children's rights movement. By reminding ourselves that children's rights are human rights, we:

- Allow for greater intersectional collaboration with other movements.
- Affirm the legitimacy of the voice and agency of children and youth as full citizens of their communities and of the world.
- Centralize the lived experiences of children, families, and communities rather than observing these experiences through the lenses of our respective "fields."
- Frame the work of child protection and children's rights across the life course, an approach that can be important for engaging stakeholders who don't consider themselves to be working in this area.
- Affirm broad, intercultural support for these ideas.
- Harmonize the normative rights frame with the developmental process frame, embedding rights values in all practices and policy work.

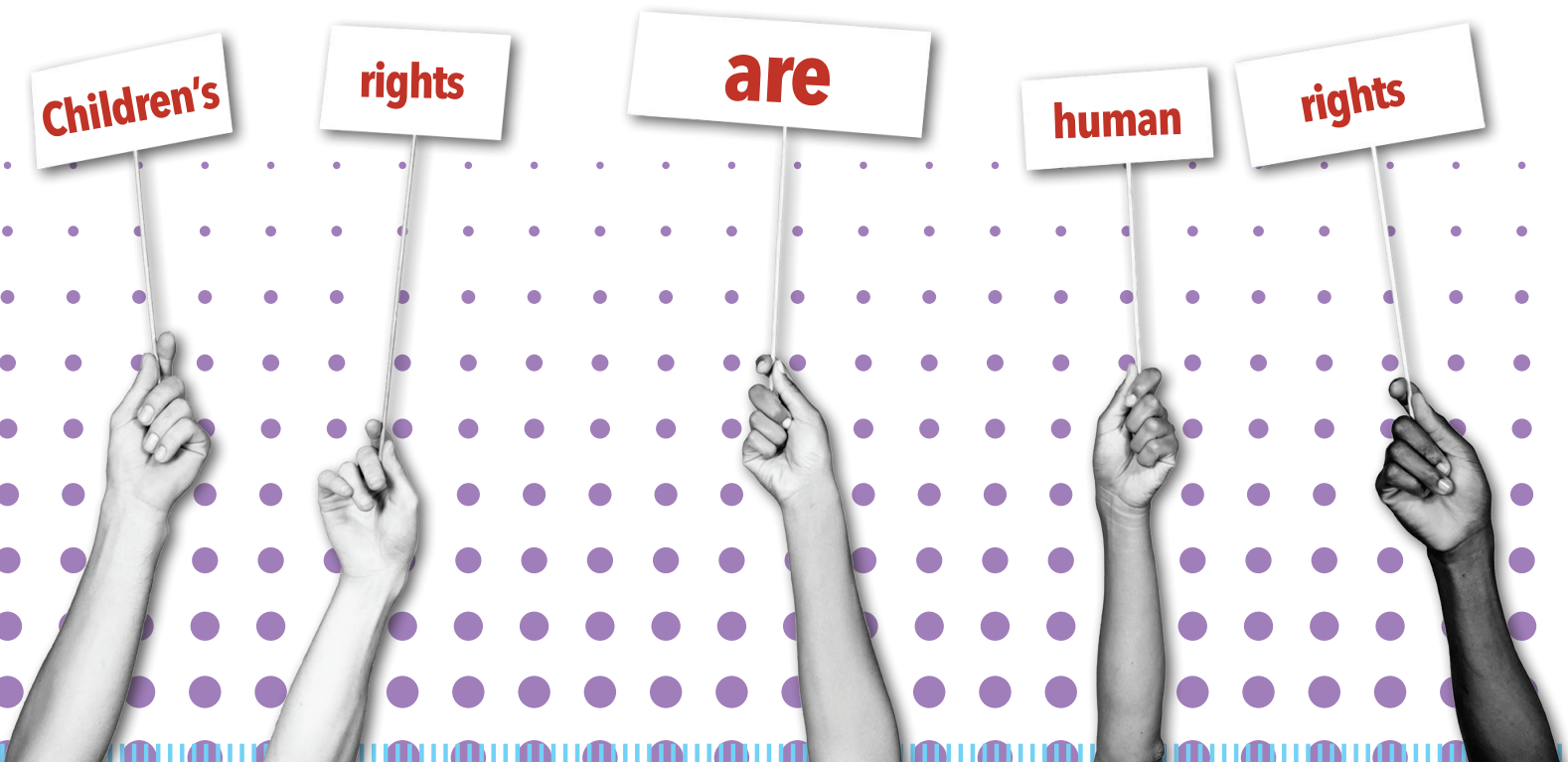
GROUND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS IN LOCAL REALITIES, WORLDVIEWS, AND VALUE SYSTEMS

Children's rights and child protection are not conceptual or ethereal. They do not float in the realm of the international community, disconnected from daily life. They must be validated, enacted, and promoted by community-led actions for human rights and development, including for children.

How can the concepts and tenets of children's rights find resonance with the social norms that guide child-rearing and care behavior in varied cultural contexts? How can building a human rights and children's rights culture be designed as cultural dialogue and iterative co-creation of new shared norms and patterns of behavior? How can we document, feature, promote, share lessons, and create platforms for visibility, for getting the word out? How can we use new technology to discover, learn, share?

RECALIBRATION: ALIGNING COMMUNITY WORK WITH NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL PRIORITIES IN OPEN SYSTEMS

Global standards and norms and local realities and values should constantly inform each other. We must actively explore and develop the 'glocal' approach to children's rights and seek to upend power imbalances. We should modulate, balance, and reorient power and orientation differences between children, families, communities, and the "formal" systems and global mechanisms that are designed to serve them in modern societies. Such recalibration will create space for local perspectives and voices to help co-shape policy and practice and frameworks of social accountability. Resilience in turbulent times arises from core stability in large systems as well as space and support for localized adaptation, differentiation, re-organization, reflexive learning.





LEADING THE MOVEMENT

MOVEMENT BUILDING: WHAT, WHO, HOW?

We must dig deep if we want to help forge a new movement—or a newly reinvigorated one—for children’s rights. For starters, if we feel that we have been subject to silos and barriers in the past—unable to meaningfully connect and make meaning with the fields of women’s rights, indigenous rights, LGBTI rights, or disability rights—we must ask where such barriers have come from and what we can do to overcome them. In thinking these issues through, we must consider not only **what** an effective movement-building process should prioritize but also **how** it would bring together emerging agendas forward and, importantly, **who**. Children and their partners are building movements all over the world. How can we engage and amplify more voices?

PROMOTING LEADERSHIP AT ALL LEVELS

Building the children’s rights field means growing leadership as a plural form. Those who operate in the elite sphere of international children’s rights—within the United Nations, international NGOs, universities—play an important role in keeping children’s rights on the global development agenda, but there must also be work to incubate leadership at multiple levels. We understand that leadership **can** be fostered, supported, and buttressed, and the need to build in support to diverse change agents and thought leaders should take into account what kind of environment must be fostered to allow leadership to bloom at multiple levels in multiple settings. Challenges that we should seek to take up include:

- ▀ How can we foster critical reflection and promote leadership within existing child rights networks of national civil society organizations?
- ▀ What can be done to broaden these coalitions and better amplify the voices of those working in deeply local spaces, including those in indigenous communities?



FOSTERING CHILDREN'S AGENCY AND VOICE

Despite the relative powerlessness of children in most societies, there is power in rights work with children, creating space for their agency and voice.

Actors often talk about the centrality of children's voices and child participation to their work, but international actors often don't know how to bring children to the center of the work on child rights. If we open our eyes, we see children and youth leading movements all around us—from individual children who become global "stars" or symbols for their work, such as Ahed Tamimi of Palestine and Malala Yousafzai of Pakistan, to child- and youth-led movements. The children of Parkland, Florida, who are leading the national conversation about common sense gun laws in the United States are working in a long-standing tradition of such movements, which includes the African Movement of Working Children and Youth, the United We Dream movement of Latin and Central American immigrant children, and so many others.

**AMPLIFY
YOUNG
VOICES!**

None of these movements has emerged in a void without support and space, and creative strategies are needed for building genuine child-led constituencies for children's rights. These constituencies can self-generate as new generations emerge. What role can national and international groups play, if any, in helping to grow, to incubate, or to support such movements? Understanding how to do so while also empowering parents and families is critical.

LEARNING PARTNERSHIPS

We at the CPC Learning Network work to foster learning partnerships around global child protection across the worlds of policy, service provision, and research. As we turn to the future, we are asking ourselves how we can better create a forum in which these actors—as well as those working at the ground level of movement building—can share what they are learning about building an effective movement for children's rights. How can we get learning about child protection, child development, and children's rights into the hands of change agents for their purposes of constituency-building and fostering self-generating movements?

We extend a hand to all of you in whose grasp this brochure has landed. Would you like to join us on this journey, or would you like us to join you on yours? Our eyes, ears, hearts, email boxes, and mobile phones are open and ready to hear from you.

