

Prevent Child Sexual Abuse Programme

# **Supporting a safer world where children can thrive**

**2019 – present  
Grant-making strategy**





## Our vision

Child sexual abuse is preventable. This fact drives and inspires our support to end child sexual abuse online and offline. Our partners are survivors, advocates, and researchers working to accelerate action at the community, national, and global levels.



## Our challenge and opportunity

Child sexual abuse is a global public health crisis: data from UNICEF suggests that 1 in 5 girls and 1 in 13 boys have been sexually abused or exploited before reaching the age of 18. The impact is often devastating and long-lasting, affecting mental and physical health, future relationships, and society at large. Child sexual abuse occurs around the world in schools, sports, communities, and digital environments.

For years, child sexual abuse has been cloaked in silence and stigma, resulting in government and societal inaction, poor investment, and impunity. The good news is that there is growing public pressure to do more, and we have the knowledge and the solutions needed to prevent harm before it happens.

For example, survivors and allies are organising, speaking out, and calling on governments, institutions, and corporations to make safer environments for children online and offline. There is also a growing number of researchers who are creating new solutions on what works to prevent child sexual abuse. There is a path forward, and we are inspired by our partners' efforts to bring about change.

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*Based on feedback from grantee partners, we updated the strategy in 2023 to explain and describe our strategy in more detail. We do not anticipate making any significant changes to this strategy over the next few years; however, we will continue to refine it as we learn more from our partners. We will communicate to our partners if there are any changes.*

## Our programme aspirations

Building on Oak's values and Oak's funding principles, we strive to reflect the following aspirations into our grant-making practices and decisions:

### **We aim to be responsive to opportunities, support bold initiatives, and learn from success and failure**

We support efforts that have the potential for the greatest impact. We also support bold initiatives that may fail. We commit to learning from our partners, taking advantage of political opportunities, and adapting to changes in the field. Our strategy will continually evolve to remain responsive to opportunities, while ensuring our Trustee's vision to end child sexual abuse is reflected in our grant-making.

### **We aim to do no harm**

Research tells us that child sexual abuse affects us all, either directly or indirectly. To this end, we aim to do no harm in our grant-making. This includes understanding better how we can best support our partners and continue to learn more as a team.

### **We aim to uplift diverse voices, and support communities and people across the globe**

Sexual abuse impacts all children, regardless of their economic situation, race, or gender. Given the global nature of our grant-making programme, we support efforts that uplift survivors and diverse voices that are demanding change, and prioritise the local context and culture. For example, we support: more locally owned and driven initiatives, including research; initiatives that shine a spotlight on boys as survivors and see men as a positive force in prevention; and projects led by local communities and people facing discrimination.

### **We aim to support powerful alliances and connections to contribute to change**

Strategic alliances can support our partners' efforts to mobilise, create solidarity, and inspire public pressure. Alliances are also critical to scale up solutions and strategies quickly, build innovative solutions, and combine valuable expertise and resources to achieve lasting change. This is why we support efforts that build relationships between our grantee partners, with other funders, businesses, communities, and governments.

### **Oak's definition of child sexual abuse**

We recognise that there are many definitions of child sexual abuse (e.g., from the CDC, WHO, and UNICEF, among others), and that different disciplines and communities use different terms and approaches.

At Oak, we commonly use the term child sexual abuse and understand this to include many forms of sexual violence against children, including incest, peer-to-peer abuse, technology-facilitated abuse online (grooming and illicit images), sexual exploitation, and rape.

## What we fund:

### Six funding areas

Oak and our grantee partners are preventing child sexual abuse in multiple ways, and multiple solutions are needed for positive change. Therefore, based on the interest of our Trustee and consultations with partners, we have decided to support strategic initiatives and new ideas, and build capacity and talent over the long term. To pursue our vision and support our partners' work, we have divided our funding into **six priority funding areas that focus on evidence & solutions and accountability**. These funding areas overlap and are connected to each other. We strive to work together as a team across these six areas of funding.



#### 1) Solutions & research

Preventing child sexual abuse requires multiple strategies and solutions (e.g., parent education programmes, new legislation, public communications campaigns, and perpetrator prevention programmes). In addition, effective strategies and solutions need to be locally informed, designed, and tested. Then they can be scaled up to reach as many children, families, and communities as possible. We need more evidence in understanding the nature of the problem and the most effective and scalable solutions for different contexts.

To this end, we support efforts that:

- bring together advocates, survivors, implementers, and governments to test, evaluate, and adapt promising solutions, making sure they have their desired impact, and are based on evidence and the demands of the local context;

- invest in local researchers around the globe to build the evidence of what works to prevent child sexual abuse;
- support the planning and positioning of solutions to be successfully scaled up (e.g., programmes, campaigns, and policies) to reach and help more children, families, and communities; and
- generate evidence and data to support advocacy efforts to drive change, with a particular focus on our priority areas 3, 4, and 5 (i.e., ensuring digital environments and competitive sports are safe for children, and bringing justice to survivors of child sexual abuse).



#### 2) Men & boys

Existing research shows that attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours that encourage positive masculinity and healthy relationships can protect children against child sexual abuse. However, there is a lack of investment and evidence in promoting positive masculinity. We focus on two developmental periods where gender norms are particularly malleable: early childhood and adolescence.

To this end, we support efforts that:

- test, adapt, evaluate, and plan for the scale up of programmes to: 1) positively engage men in early caregiving, and 2) promote healthy and equal relationships in adolescence; and
- advocate for increased capacity and investment in solutions to challenge ideas about traditional gender roles in early caregiving and adolescent relationships.



### 3) Safe digital environments

Governments and technology companies have a responsibility to keep children safe online. Unfortunately, children are subjected to significant harms through digital environments because they are unregulated. Photos and videos of child sexual abuse are shared online on a massive scale. This includes self-generated images that are shared without consent. In the absence of harmonised rules, social media platforms, gaming services, and online service providers vary widely in their approach and cause unsafe environments ripe for sexual abuse. They violate survivors' rights to privacy, dignity, and justice. They need to prioritise the safety and wellbeing of children.

To this end, we support efforts that:

- bring together survivors, young people, parents, and key stakeholders to hold technology companies accountable to build safe environments and remove online child sexual abuse material;
- support coalition building and research that can be used for advocacy, and campaigning to raise public awareness and generate public pressure on governments and technology companies;
- advocate for regulation to change the norms of industry and technology platforms with a particular focus on preventing and removing child sexual abuse material online, and promoting the safety by design movement;
- build child safe technologies into the design of any new online platforms to prevent harm before it occurs; and
- advocate for new policies, with a specific focus in the EU, US, and UK, where opportunities exist to establish precedent for other governments.



### 4) Safe sports

Leaders in charge of clubs, federations, and governments are responsible for making sports safe for children. However, increasing numbers of adults are speaking up about their abuse as child athletes. In addition, research shows that young elite athletes are at a high risk of sexual abuse. The unregulated environments for competitive child and youth athletes increase their risk of abuse and widespread impunity for perpetrators and institutions when abuse happens. Clubs, federations, and governments need to prioritise the safety and wellbeing of child athletes and be held accountable for their inaction.

To this end, we support efforts that:

- implement measures that safeguard young athletes against harm, so they can train and compete with dignity and in safety;
- evaluate safeguarding measures to keep young athletes safe in clubs and use the evaluation findings to influence change across the sporting sector;
- conduct research to support survivors and their allies and strengthen safeguarding efforts;
- provide support to survivor advocates and their allies who are speaking out and demanding change and justice on their terms (e.g., start-up funding and comprehensive organisational development support to new and emerging groups, among others);
- help survivors and their allies to expose abuse and advocate for change that includes survivors' unique expertise (e.g., calls for national inquiries, national centres for safe sports, and calls for justice, among others); and
- provide self-care, advocacy, communications, and holistic security support to survivor groups and their allies, based on their expressed needs.



## 5) Justice for survivors

Survivors of child sexual abuse need to be able to go to the authorities, report abuse to those who hold power, have their voices heard, and have their crimes brought to justice. However, laws in many countries and measures within organisations are often discriminatory and do not provide safety and access to justice to survivors and their families. This results in widespread impunity and distrust of justice systems, fostering little incentive to report abuse or seek justice. Individuals and institutions need to be held accountable for their crimes and inaction. Ultimately, we believe that bringing justice to survivors can deter child sexual abuse.

To this end, we support efforts that:

- improve the laws and policies that guarantee survivors' access to justice (e.g., through eliminating statutes of limitations, improving rape definitions, and recognising boys as victims under the law, among others);
- improve access to justice of survivors (e.g., through child-friendly interviewing, evidence collection, reporting, and psychosocial support), while being sensitive to the needs of communities facing systemic discrimination from formal justice systems and others facing stigma so they can seek help; and
- invest in research and evaluations to identify effective interventions, barriers, and opportunities for survivors to access justice.



## 6) Survivor-led organisations

Supporting survivor-led organisations and their allies is a priority throughout our strategy. More survivors are speaking out, organising, and demanding change as individuals, volunteers, or through their participation in the work of not-for-profit organisations. Their advocacy is creating a new sense of urgency that is critical in preventing child sexual abuse. However, many survivor-led organisations and their allies lack funding and capacity to build their organisations to advocate for change safely and effectively.

To this end, in partnership with survivors, we support efforts that: build connections and alliances of survivors and their allies to advocate within our priority areas;

- ensure that survivors and their allies have what they need to campaign and advocate to increase government commitment and funding to prevent and respond to child sexual abuse;
- ensure technology, sports, and policy and law reforms support survivor needs and demands to prevent child sexual abuse and end impunity;
- strengthen and build the capacity of new and emerging groups to support their ability to operate effectively; and
- ensure that survivors are informing the design and evaluation of promising solutions to maximise impact.



## Strategic opportunities

In addition to these six focus areas, we invest in a wide variety of partnerships to allow us to experiment and to help us remain responsive, nimble, and relevant to new opportunities that fall outside of our six focus areas of funding. While we have intentionally decided not to create criteria to guide these investments, they tend to fall into these categories:

- field-building efforts to strengthen networks and alliances, groundbreaking research to track progress in the field and to support advocacy, watchdog reports to hold governments and institutions accountable, and strategic communications, including creating hope-based messaging;
- experimental grants to test new approaches and partnerships;
- exit-, emergency-, and bridge-grants to support our partners' transition to new funding sources and to address unforeseen challenges and opportunities; and
- special initiative grants and legacy investments in areas of interest to the Trustees (e.g., preventing family separation in Bulgaria and supporting LGBTQI+ youth in Switzerland).

## Where we fund

While child sexual abuse is a public health crisis impacting all communities, most of our partnerships are in Southern and Eastern Africa, Europe, the UK, the US, and Latin America. While we may exceptionally consider partnerships outside these regions, we aim to concentrate our grant-making in countries and regions where we have other grantee partners to foster stronger connections and collective action.

## How we work with our grantee partners

### Application process

Our grants are usually multi-year and long term (three years or more). When we formally invite an organisation to apply for a grant, we discuss the size of the grant and whether it will be project support or core support (i.e., flexible and unrestricted funding). We work with organisations to develop the application in partnership, ensuring we communicate consistently about when and who will make the decision on a grant, how the application process works, and how long it will take. We also discuss the possibilities of renewal well in advance of the end of a grant. We consider all renewals as distinct and separate grants.

[Download this document to learn about the grant-making timeline and process.](#)

### Communications

We believe that the best relationships are built on trust, and we foster that in our relationships over time. We maintain a relationship with our grantee partners throughout the lifetime of the grant to share learning and impact with other grantee partners and the foundation. We value honest, open, and frank exchange and invite feedback on how we can be better grant-makers. We will ask for formal reports on an annual basis. At the start of the grant, we discuss the regularity of our communications and communications preferences. For example, we can offer a meeting every six months by telephone. We strive to visit our grantee partners in person when possible. In addition, we commit to sharing our strategies and approaches, as well as where a grant fits within broader efforts at the start of the grant.

### Events and partner convenings

Where practical, we attend events organised by grantee partners to listen and learn from their experience. We also explore opportunities to convene and consult our grantee partners to better inform our grant-making and foster joint learning and connections.

## Our budget and requests for support

Our annual budget is currently USD 43.3 million, with a plan to grow to USD 48.5 million by 2025. As a small team, we can only make up to 53 grants per year. This means that we have to turn down many requests that come our way, despite alignment with our strategy.

Organisations that fit our current strategy can submit an enquiry through our website: <https://oakfnd.org/submit-enquiry/>. We know it can be challenging for organisations with limited resources to connect with funders, and we do value and consider all submissions, but an enquiry does not guarantee a formal invitation to apply for funding.

## Additional information

### Our team

We are researchers, advocates, campaigners, programme implementers, and multi-disciplinary and multicultural people. We are organised in two teams (evidence & solutions and accountability). We recognise that the funding areas overlap and are connected; therefore, we work together as a team across our six funding areas. Collectively, we speak 12 languages, hold 12 nationalities, and have ending child sexual abuse at the heart of everything we do.

### Contact us

If you would like to speak to us, please email us on [info@oakfnd.ch](mailto:info@oakfnd.ch).

### Connect with us on social media

Through our social media channels, we amplify the voices of our grantee partners and support the work of our programmes. We want to inspire hope and possibility.



### Our grantee partners

For information on our current grantee partners, [visit our grant database on our website](#) or read our annual reports. Visit our website page to learn more about our partners' work. We publish stories on a regular basis that help explain our grant-making approaches.