

# The Reporting Cycle of the Committee on the Rights of the Child

A GUIDE FOR NGOs AND NHRIs



## **About Child Rights Connect**

Since our establishment in 1983 to influence the drafting of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, Child Rights Connect, formerly the NGO Group for the CRC, has strived to connect international human rights mechanisms and processes to the daily realities of children.

We are an independent non-profit network of 80 national, regional and international organisations committed to ensuring that all children fully enjoy their rights as defined by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Based in Geneva, Switzerland, Child Rights Connect is a unique coordinating platform for NGO cooperation and action.

Working closely with civil society, State and UN actors, Child Rights Connect has played a central role in key child rights developments at international level, including the drafting of the Optional Protocol on a Communications Procedure, and is considered a leading expert on the work of the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Child Rights Connect holds special ECOSOC consultative status at the United Nations.

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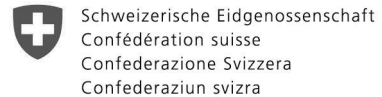
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In particular, Child Rights Connect would like to thank Audrey Rinaldi and Anastasia Panayotidis from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights; Nicolette Moodie from UNICEF; and Rachel Coomer from the Legal Assistance Centre in Namibia.

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Note: The information in this publication is produced by Child Rights Connect and does not necessarily reflect the views of our donors.

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# Abbreviations

Art.	Article
CHR	Commission on Human Rights
Committee	Committee on the Rights of the Child
CRC/Convention	Convention on the Rights of the Child
HRC	Human Rights Council
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NGO Group for the CRC	NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child (this the former name of Child Rights Connect)
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
OP	Optional Protocol
OPAC	Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict
OPSC	Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography
OP3 CRC	Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a Communications Procedure
Pre-session	Pre-sessional working group
UN	United Nations
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund



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# Preface

The near universal ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) provides the foundations for improving the situation of children around the world. Yet, millions of children are far from being able to claim and enjoy their rights. Worse still, for many children the violation of their rights happens on a daily basis.

While it is States that have the legal obligation to report on and implement the CRC, achieving the change we are seeking for all children demands the engagement of society as a whole, including Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) and children themselves. One of the ways each of these actors can do this is by reporting to the Committee on the Rights of the Child (the Committee) when their State is being reviewed, in order to give their perspective on the situation facing children at national level and the measures which the State needs to take to fulfill its obligations to uphold children's rights. However, the UN human rights system can seem inaccessible for many national civil society actors. This is where the role of Child Rights Connect (formerly the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child) comes into play.

Following its significant influence over the drafting of the CRC, Child Rights Connect<sup>1</sup> has been working closely with the Committee from the time of its establishment and supporting NGOs to report to it since the first State party report was examined in 1993. We have become leading experts in the CRC reporting process thanks to our unique perspective of the work of the Committee and our long-standing experience in supporting the effective engagement of NGOs in influencing the process. The Committee has recognised our work: in its General Comment 5, the Committee not only emphasised the importance of independent monitoring by other actors, but also highlighted Child Rights Connect's "very welcome, strong and supportive impact on the reporting process and other aspects of the Committee's work."

By acting as the link between all independent national actors and the Committee, we have made this UN process accessible to organisations from around the world. While our traditional focus has been on supporting NGOs, especially child rights coalitions, we have also extended our support to NHRIs,<sup>2</sup> in particular children's Ombudspersons or Commissioners, and children, as they can take part in the reporting process in the same way as NGOs and UN agencies.

We provide technical assistance, training, logistical and financial assistance and have developed practical tools such as this guide, so that NGOs, NHRIs and children can more easily and effectively influence the reporting process and use the Committee's recommendations to advance child rights in their countries.

Now in its fourth edition, our *Guide to Reporting* continues to be one of our most successful tools to help NGOs and now NHRIs to engage effectively with the Committee. As in the previous editions, the *Guide to Reporting* explains all the stages of the reporting cycle and provides practical advice on how to engage with the Committee and follow up on its recommendations. This new edition is updated to reflect the evolving working methods of the Committee and take into account good practices with proven positive results seen by NGOs and NHRIs preparing alternative reports and following up on recommendations.

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<sup>1</sup> Child Rights Connect was called the Ad Hoc Group for the drafting of the Convention on the Rights of the Child when it was first established by 20 NGOs in 1983.

<sup>2</sup> Child Rights Connect supports Independent NHRIs as set out in the Committee on the Rights of the Child's General Comment No. 2 on the Role of Independent National Human Rights Institutions.

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# Foreword



The Committee on the Rights of the Child (the Committee) is dependent on the work done by non-governmental organisations (NGOs), national human rights institutions (NHRIs) and children in monitoring the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In order to be able to raise the right issues with the States parties, the Committee needs information on the situation faced by children on the ground from different sources. NGOs, NHRIs and children are crucial in this respect, along with UNICEF and other UN bodies.

The reports upon which we base our concerns and recommendations must be reliable. Child Rights Connect has contributed greatly to improving the quality of the information received and to making the alternative reports well-structured and useful for the Committee. The advice presented in this guide is based on a longstanding relationship with the Committee.

As the Committee has no specific procedures to follow up on its Concluding Observations, there is a particular need for people and organisations within the country to observe the government and its actions to implement the Committee's recommendations. In many countries the activities of NGOs, NHRIs and children during this part of the process are invaluable.

We encourage you to continue your important work to strengthen the implementation of children's rights around the world.

**Kirsten Sandberg**

Chairperson

UN Committee on the Rights of the Child

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# Introduction

As part of the process to monitor the progress made by States in implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC or Convention) and its first two Optional Protocols (OPs), the Committee on the Rights of the Child (the Committee) periodically reviews each State that is party to the treaty.

When provided with reliable and relevant information from a variety of sources, the Committee is better able to make concrete and effective recommendations to States, to more fully guarantee the rights defined in the CRC and its OPs. As part of its review of States' progress towards the full implementation of the CRC, and in line with its article 45(a), the Committee examines reports submitted by UN agencies (e.g. UNICEF) and other competent bodies, including NGOs, National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs),<sup>3</sup> as well as children.

To understand the impact of State initiatives on the rights-holders – the children – it is essential for the Committee to have the perspective of NGOs, NHRIs and children themselves. These national actors are best placed to monitor the impact of the State's measures to fulfil their obligations under the CRC and to evaluate whether they are effective. Where gaps in implementation occur, they can suggest concrete recommendations to help a State to comply with its obligations under the CRC and its OPs.

At the national level, the preparation of an alternative report encourages and facilitates public scrutiny of government policies and provides NGOs and NHRIs with ways to influence the national agenda. It opens a debate on the status of children and can create an opportunity to have a serious dialogue with all levels of government about the State's efforts to comply with the CRC. Reporting can also empower those who take part in the process, by offering a legitimate external source to which children's issues can be raised and addressed.

## Why report to the Committee?

Reporting to the Committee can be integrated into a broader strategy for NGOs and NHRIs conducting on-going monitoring and advocacy for the improvement of child rights in a State. Effective engagement with the Committee's reporting process provides an important opportunity to harness the power of the international human rights system to reinforce advocacy messages and affect change for the advancement of child rights at national level. This work does take time and resources and it is important for NGOs and NHRIs to consider how to incorporate these activities into their current advocacy work using the resources available to them.

## The Convention on the Rights of the Child

The CRC was unanimously adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 20 November 1989 and entered into force on 2 September 1990. It is a comprehensive instrument made up of 54 articles, which sets out the rights that define universal principles and norms for children, taking into account their need for special assistance and protection due to their status and vulnerability. By ratifying the CRC, a State takes on legal obligations to protect, respect and fulfil those rights for all children within its jurisdiction. The CRC is not only the first international human rights treaty to include civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, but it is also the most widely ratified international human rights treaty.

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<sup>3</sup> For the purpose of this publication, Child Rights Connect uses the context set out in the Committee on the Rights of the Child's General Comment No. 2 on the Role of Independent National Human Rights Institutions.

## **The Optional Protocols on Children Involved in Armed Conflict and the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography**

The Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (OPAC) and the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (OPSC) are separate legal instruments which must be ratified independently of the CRC and are only binding on States which have ratified them. Both Optional Protocols include a provision by which it is possible to be a State party to an OP having only signed but not ratified the CRC.

On 25 May 2000, the UN General Assembly adopted the OPAC and OPSC, which entered into force on 12 February and 18 January 2002, respectively. They each provide substantive provisions which strengthen the protection afforded to children in the CRC in relation to the involvement of children in armed conflict, as well as children at risk of, or in situations of sale, prostitution and/or pornography.

Although similar in terms of structure, the two OPs differ in substance; therefore, the information that is required to monitor their implementation also differs. If you are part of an NGO coalition, consider reaching out to NGOs who work on OPAC- and OPSC-related issues to encompass those themes in your coalition's on-going advocacy and monitoring work. For detailed information on how to monitor the implementation of the OPAC and OPSC, as well as how to prepare an alternative report for each one, refer to our guide *Reporting on the OPSC and OPAC: A guide for non-governmental organisations*.<sup>4</sup>

## **The Optional Protocol to the CRC on a Communications Procedure**

This international treaty, approved by the UN General Assembly on 19 December 2011, provides two new ways to challenge States' violations of children's rights. It establishes:

1. A communication procedure – Children or their representatives can bring complaints about violations of their rights to the Committee, if these were not fully resolved in national courts.
2. An inquiry procedure for grave or systematic violations of child rights, which is open to anyone.

While States are required to address child rights violations in their national justice systems, the latter do not always provide adequate solutions or remedies. When rights defined in the CRC, OPAC and OPSC are not sufficiently protected at national level, it is critical that there be a system to turn to at the international level in order to address violations. With this OP on a Communications Procedure, children can:

- ▶ Bring their individual cases to be considered by the Committee;
- ▶ Access a communications mechanism adapted to their specific rights, which will provide concrete recommendations to States about violations incurred;
- ▶ Get international recognition of the violations they suffered.

For detailed information about whether this OP is applicable in your country, how to submit a complaint or submit information about grave or systematic violations of child rights, visit the website of, or contact, *Ratify OP3 CRC – International Coalition for the OPCRC on a Communications Procedure*.<sup>5</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Contact Child Rights Connect to request a hard copy, or visit our website to download the electronic version: [http://www.childrightsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Guide\\_OP\\_EN\\_web.pdf](http://www.childrightsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Guide_OP_EN_web.pdf). This guide can also be used by NHRIs to report on the two Optional Protocols. This guide is also relevant to NHRIs wishing to report on the OPAC and OPSC.

<sup>5</sup> The International Coalition can be contacted by e-mail ([info@ratifyop3crc.org](mailto:info@ratifyop3crc.org)) or through its website ([www.ratifyop3crc.org](http://www.ratifyop3crc.org))

## The Committee on the Rights of the Child

The Committee is composed of eighteen independent experts who are elected by States parties to the CRC. The Committee members serve in their personal capacity for four-year terms and can be re-elected. The CRC requires that Committee members be of “high moral standing and recognised competence in the field covered by this Convention” (art. 43(2)). An equitable geographical distribution and representation of the principal legal systems is taken into consideration in their election.<sup>6</sup>

The Committee can only receive or consider reports concerning countries which have ratified or acceded to the CRC and/or the OPs. To examine the progress made by States in fulfilling their obligations under these treaties, the Committee meets in Geneva (Switzerland) three times a year for a period of four weeks each time: three weeks of plenary session with State representatives, followed by one week of pre-sessional working group meetings (pre-session), with UN agencies, NGOs, NHRIs and children, to prepare for upcoming sessions.

The Committee’s approach is non-confrontational and attempts to engage States parties in a constructive dialogue with a view to obtaining an accurate assessment of the situation of children in the State under review, and making recommendations of how the State can further work to fulfil its obligations with regard to child rights.

### Committee Secretariat

The Committee is supported by a small permanent Secretariat at the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Geneva. The Secretariat<sup>7</sup> is responsible for providing support and advice to the Committee in all its areas of work.

<sup>6</sup> For more information on the Committee’s election process, read our factsheet: ‘Elections to the Committee on the Rights of the Child: Information for NGOs, NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child’, 2006 [http://www.crin.org/docs/CRC\\_FS\\_E1\\_8\[1\].pdf](http://www.crin.org/docs/CRC_FS_E1_8[1].pdf)

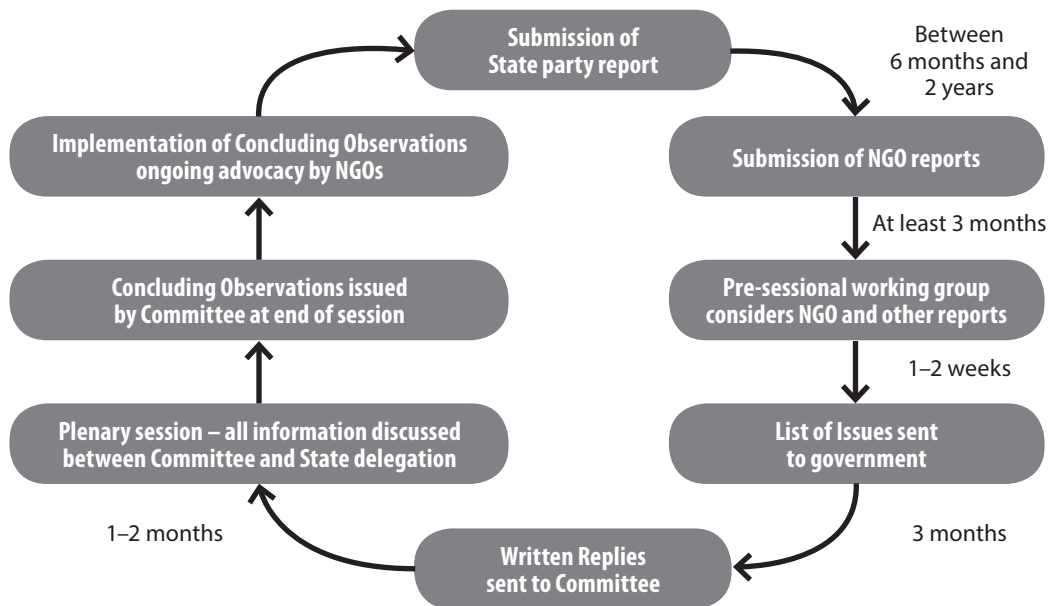
<sup>7</sup> The Committee Secretariat can be contacted by email at: [crc@ohchr.org](mailto:crc@ohchr.org)

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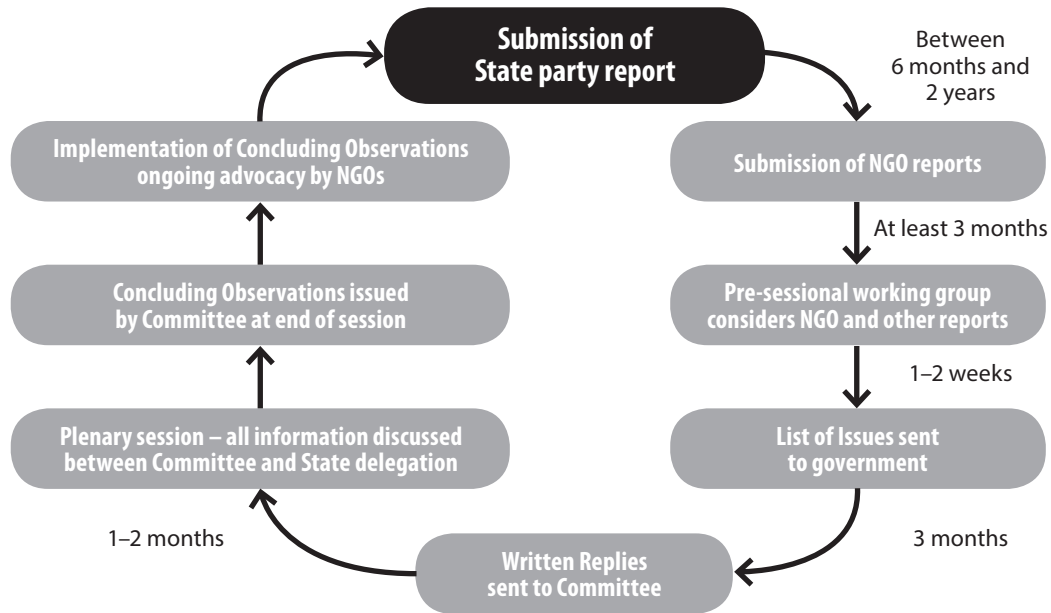
# The CRC reporting process

The Committee's reporting process should be perceived as a cycle. A structure to monitor the implementation of the CRC and its OPs in a particular State party can be established at any time, regardless of what stage the State is at in the reporting process. There is no need to wait for the State to be reviewed by the Committee to establish monitoring mechanisms or create coalitions of NGOs, because monitoring a State's compliance with its obligations is an on-going process at the national level.

## Reporting cycle



# Step 1: Submission of the State party report



A new reporting cycle begins when the Committee Secretariat receives the electronic copy of the State party report by email. These reports are usually scheduled in the Committee’s calendar of sessions in order of when they are received, irrespective of when they were due. In exceptional circumstances, States may be given priority if they submit overdue initial CRC reports or where OP reports are submitted close to the review of the CRC report and the Committee decides to consider all the reports from the same State together.

Article 44 of the CRC sets up the periodic reporting mechanism of States parties, noting that a State party must submit an initial report to the Committee two years after it ratifies the CRC and it enters into force in the respective State, and then every five years thereafter. The submission date for subsequent periodic reports is set out in the last paragraph of the Concluding Observations,<sup>8</sup> which are adopted by the Committee and sent to the State following each review. Given that the Committee often has a backlog of reports to review, the date set in the Concluding Observations is the relevant date to follow to find out when the country’s next report is officially due.



**NOTE:** If the State party has not submitted a report by the deadline given to it, the review will be delayed until the Committee receives the report. The Committee does not schedule a review in the absence of the State party report. NGOs and NHRIs should not submit their reports for the deadline set for the State party, but rather wait to see when the review is scheduled and what the specific deadline is for NGO and NHRI reports, which is posted on the Committee’s website on the relevant pre-session page.

<sup>8</sup> As part of each State party review, the Committee adopts a set of Concluding Observations, which are sent to the State party to guide them in the measures they need to take to fulfil their obligation.

## 1.1 Common core document

As part of their reporting obligations, States parties are required to prepare a common core document<sup>9</sup> which contains general information on the implementation of all the human rights treaties which a State has ratified. It is therefore not child rights-specific. It is transmitted in the same format to all human rights treaty bodies and should be updated by the State on a regular basis to ensure that the information is current.

The common core document should include general factual and statistical information such as demographic, social and cultural characteristics and information on the constitutional, political and legal structure of the country. It should also contain information on the general framework for the protection and promotion of human rights such as the ratification of international human rights instruments, reservations, the general legal framework at national level, and how treaty body reports are prepared. It should also include information on the implementation of substantive human rights provisions common to all or several human rights treaties such as non-discrimination and equality.

In addition to the common core document, States are required to submit treaty-specific reports.

## 1.2 Treaty-specific report

When preparing periodic reports, States must follow the Committee's *Treaty-specific Guidelines Regarding the Form and Content of Periodic Reports*.<sup>10</sup> The treaty-specific reports should not repeat information detailed in the common core document or earlier reports, but rather provide specific information on the measures adopted to implement the Concluding Observations made by the Committee during the examination of the previous report. States are requested to provide explanations for any recommendations that have not been implemented, information on difficulties encountered in implementing recommendations and measures that are planned to overcome these obstacles.

### 1.2.1 Integrated CRC and OP reports

Like the CRC, States that ratify one or both OPs are required to submit an initial report two years after its entry into force in the State concerned and every five years thereafter. An initial OPAC or OPSC report is a separate document from the CRC State party report. After the review of the initial OP report, the Committee will adopt a set of Concluding Observations for each OP.

Periodic OP reports should be combined with the State party report on the CRC to produce one integrated report.<sup>11</sup> At the end of the review of an integrated State party report on the CRC, the OPAC and/or OPSC, the Committee will adopt one set of Concluding Observations covering all the treaties covered by the report.



**TIP!** If your State party is due to submit an integrated report, it is useful to remind the government department coordinating the drafting of the report that the OPAC and/or OPSC must be integrated and given due attention in the report.

<sup>9</sup> Guidelines for the common core document can be found in Compilation of Guidelines on the form and content of reports to be submitted by State parties to the international human rights treaties, HRI/GEN/2/Rev6 [www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/TB/HRI-GEN-2-REV-6\\_en.docx](http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/TB/HRI-GEN-2-REV-6_en.docx)

<sup>10</sup> 'Treaty-specific guidelines regarding the form and content of periodic reports to be submitted by States parties under article 44, paragraph 1 (b), of the Convention on the Rights of the Child' Adopted October 2010 (CRC/C/58/Rev.2).

<sup>11</sup> For a detailed account of reporting on the provisions of the OPAC and OPSC, see the NGO Group guide *Reporting on the OPSC and OPAC: A guide for NGOs*. This guide can also be used by NHRIs wishing to report on the OPs.



### 1.3 Writing and submitting the State party report

It is the State's responsibility to write its own report. By leading this process from within, it is an opportunity for the State to conduct a comprehensive evaluation of how it is implementing the CRC through national legislation, policies and actions. The Committee always emphasises, including in its Concluding Observations, that the process of preparing the next State party report should be broad and participatory. This means that States should consult with all non-State actors, including children, to get their views on the situation in the country and on-going challenges. While non-State actors can give the government their views, or provide information and statistics based on their work with children, the government takes the final decision on what it will include in its report.

Once the State party report has been finalised in one of the six official United Nations languages<sup>12</sup> it should be sent in hard copy and by email to the Secretariat of the Committee at the OHCHR in Geneva. The Committee must receive the report by email in Microsoft Word format to ensure that the support services can process it as an official UN document. The State will be scheduled for review at the next available time and priority will be given to States submitting initial CRC reports.

All documents produced by the State party or the Committee, as part of the review, are public documents and are available on the website of the Committee.<sup>13</sup> In line with article 44(6) of the CRC, States parties should "make their reports widely available to the public in their own countries", so any non-State actor can access the State party report and other public documents.

#### State reports should be sent to the following address:

##### Secretariat of the Committee on the Rights of the Child

Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)

Palais des Nations

CH-1211 Geneva 10, Switzerland

E: [registry@ohchr.org](mailto:registry@ohchr.org) and [crc@ohchr.org](mailto:crc@ohchr.org)

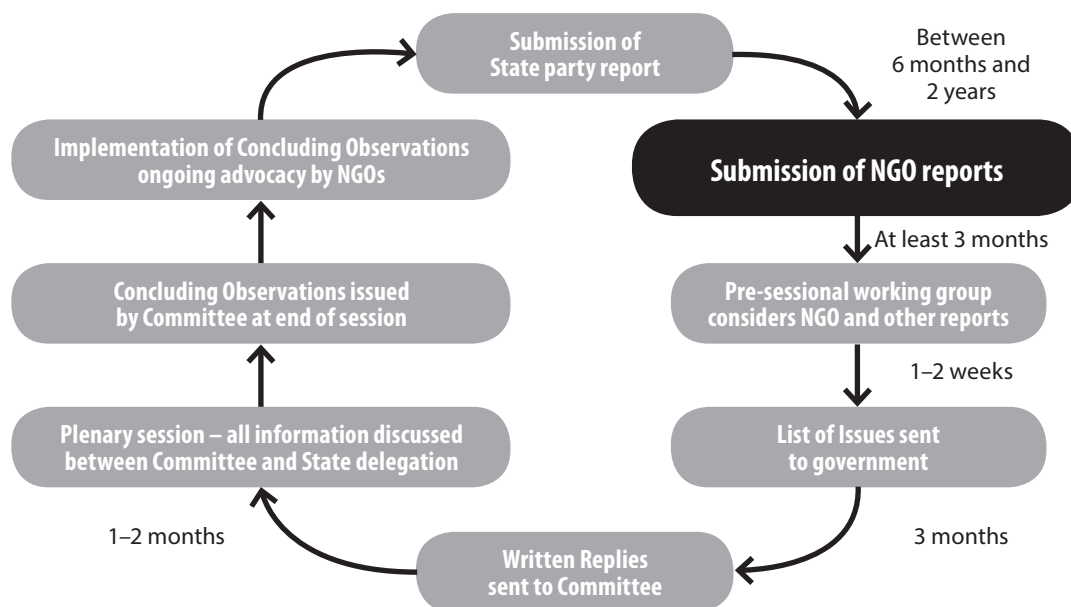
W: [www.ohchr.org](http://www.ohchr.org)

<sup>12</sup> While, the Committee accepts reports in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian or Spanish, its working languages are English, French and Spanish. Reports should therefore be sent in these languages where possible, as translation can take a while.

<sup>13</sup> Once the State report is received, it will be posted on the website of the Committee and translated into the three official languages of the Committee: English, French and Spanish.

[http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/TreatyBodyExternal/SessionsList.aspx?Treaty=CRC](http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/TreatyBodyExternal/SessionsList.aspx?Treaty=CRC)

## Step 2: Preparation and submission of the alternative report



### Naming the report

There is no set name for the reports prepared by NGOs and NHRIs. Terms commonly used are 'complementary', 'supplementary', 'NGO', 'NHRI' or 'alternative' reports. It is up to the authors to decide what to call it. The only term which is no longer used is 'Shadow report' as it can have negative connotations, which can compromise the legitimacy of the report.

### 2.1 Reporting to the Committee

It is extremely important for the Committee to receive specific, reliable and objective information from NGOs and NHRIs in order to make a comprehensive and independent assessment of the progress made and difficulties encountered in the implementation of the CRC. The Committee seeks information that deals with all areas covered by the CRC, preferably in the form of a comprehensive report.

The Committee is also interested in receiving information on areas where the State party report is incomplete, on issues of concern which are not covered or which are, in the opinion of the NGOs and NHRIs, incorrect or misleading. Experience to date demonstrates that the majority of State party reports focus on legislation and do not always provide sufficient analysis of practical challenges and measures taken for implementation. The alternative reports should therefore highlight good practices, identify gaps and underline challenges in the implementation of legislation, programmes and policies. It is up to the NGOs and NHRIs to decide what type of report to prepare based on their capacity, resources and expertise, as well as their perception of the most useful contribution to the Committee's understanding of the situation in the State at the time of the review.

Reports prepared by NGOs and NHRIs should always be separate from the State party report. Even if the State invites them to give inputs to its report as part of a consultation, NGOs and NHRIs can – and should – still write their own reports. For example, NGOs and NHRIs may wish

to add information in their report, or provide an analysis of certain issues, that is not included in the State report.

## 2.2 Joint alternative reports

Whenever possible, NGOs with different areas of expertise and representing all regions of a country should prepare a joint report. Committee members are under intense time pressure to familiarise themselves with the relevant issues in a State and therefore find it very useful to receive one comprehensive report from a representative coalition of NGOs that deals with all the clusters of the CRC.<sup>14</sup>

A group of NGOs working together to write one comprehensive report allows for more effective monitoring at national level due to the specialised knowledge of members and the variety of points of view that may be represented. Ideally, members should represent diverse jurisdictional and geographic, as well as ethnic and cultural differences that may exist in a country. It is equally important that the views of children be taken into consideration through the preparation of a separate submission or by incorporating their views into the NGOs' alternative report.

The same applies to NHRIs, especially if there is more than one NHRI in the State – whether specialised in human rights or child rights – which wishes to report to the Committee. Furthermore, NGOs and NHRIs can submit a joint report if they so desire.

### Why report as a coalition?

When the Committee receives several reports from one country, it is difficult to know how the information fits together and how it should be interpreted to develop an overall understanding of the situation of children in the country. By preparing a joint report, NGOs can:

- ▶ Increase the representativeness and credibility of the NGO submission and the chances of having more comprehensive information;
- ▶ Allow NGOs with limited resources to engage in the reporting process, regardless of their size and capacity;
- ▶ Provide the opportunity to strengthen cooperation with other child rights actors or the broader national civil society to facilitate coherent and collaborative advocacy at national level;
- ▶ Cover a greater range of child rights issues in a country, building on different member's expertise and reflect the various priority areas for a larger number of NGOs.<sup>15</sup>

## 2.3 Structure and content of alternative reports

### 2.3.1 Introduction

A brief introduction should provide information on the methodology used, a list of NGOs which contributed to the report, and may include information about the general situation in the State which may be having an impact on the implementation of the CRC.

### 2.3.2 Substantive analysis

An alternative report should be composed of a section-by-section analysis of the State party report based on the clusters in the official reporting guidelines for States, even if the report only focuses on a few key themes. An article-by-article approach should not be used, as it will make it difficult for the Committee to compare its previous Concluding Observations with the State party report and the reports from NHRIs.

<sup>14</sup> Contact Child Rights Connect to find out if there is a national coalition in your country.

<sup>15</sup> This is especially important if the State party has different territories, is a federal State or has devolved administrations, as the Committee needs to have an overview of the State party as a whole in addition to issues specific to these different entities.

NGOs and NHRIs can provide information that is not included in the State report, such as information that they feel is missing but would be important for the Committee to know about. The report should assist the Committee to more fully understand the country situation and to make informed recommendations to the State.

### Clusters of the CRC

The Committee has grouped the articles of the CRC into clusters,<sup>16</sup> which are set out in the reporting guidelines for States and correspond to the order of the discussion at the plenary session when the Committee meets with the State. These clusters should be used by NGOs and NHRIs, even if they are not preparing a comprehensive report, in order to facilitate the comparison of information by the Committee between the State report and other written submissions.

- ▶ **General measures of implementation** (art. 4, 42, 44(6))
- ▶ **Definition of the child** (art.1)
- ▶ **General principles**
  - ▶ non-discrimination (art. 2)
  - ▶ best interest of the child (art. 3)
  - ▶ right to life, survival and development (art. 6)
  - ▶ respect for the views of the child (art. 12)
- ▶ **Civil rights and freedoms**
  - ▶ birth registration, name and nationality (art. 7)
  - ▶ preservation of identity (art. 8)
  - ▶ right to seek, receive and impart information (art. 13)
  - ▶ freedom of thought, conscience and religion (art. 14)
  - ▶ freedom of association and of peaceful assembly (art. 15)
  - ▶ protection of privacy and protection of the image (art. 16)
  - ▶ access to information from a diversity of sources and protection from material harmful to his or her well-being (art. 17)
  - ▶ measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of child victims (art. 39)
- ▶ **Violence against children**
  - ▶ abuse and neglect, including physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration (arts. 19 and 39)
  - ▶ right not to be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, including corporal punishment (arts. 37(a) and 28(2))
- ▶ **Family environment and alternative care**
  - ▶ family environment and parental guidance in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child (art. 5)
  - ▶ separation from parents (art. 9)
  - ▶ family reunification (art. 10)
  - ▶ illicit transfer and non-return (art. 11)
  - ▶ parents' common responsibilities, assistance to parents and the provision of childcare services (art. 18)
  - ▶ children deprived of family environment (art. 20)
  - ▶ adoption, national and inter-country (art. 21)
  - ▶ periodic review of placement (art. 25)
  - ▶ recovery of maintenance for the child (art. 27(4))
- ▶ **Disability, basic health and welfare**
  - ▶ survival and development (art. 6(2))
  - ▶ health and health services, in particular primary health care (art. 24)

<sup>16</sup> At the time of writing this guide, the Committee has created a 9th cluster on violence against children in its concluding observations. The treaty-specific guidelines to States parties only include 8 clusters, but will be revised to have the 9 clusters in the near future. Visit the website of the Committee to view the most recent version of the Committee's reporting guidelines for States  
<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CRC/Pages/CRCIndex.aspx>

- ▶ measures to prohibit and eliminate all forms of harmful traditional practices, including, but not limited to, female genital mutilation and early and forced marriages (art. 24(3))
  - ▶ social security and childcare services and facilities (arts. 26 and 18(3));
  - ▶ standard of living and measures, including material assistance and support programmes with regard to nutrition, clothing and housing, to ensure the child's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development and reduce poverty and inequality (art. 27, paras. 1–3)
  - ▶ measures to protect children from substance abuse (art. 33)
- ▶ **Education, leisure and cultural activities**
- ▶ right to education, including vocational training and guidance (art. 28)
  - ▶ aims of education with reference also to quality of education (art. 29)
  - ▶ cultural rights of children belonging to indigenous and minority groups (art. 30)
  - ▶ rest, play, leisure, recreation and cultural and artistic activities (art. 31)
- ▶ **Special protection measures**
- ▶ children outside their country of origin seeking refugee protection, unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, internally displaced children, migrant children and children affected by migration (art. 22)
  - ▶ children belonging to a minority or an indigenous group (art. 30)
  - ▶ economic exploitation, including child labour, with specific reference to applicable minimum ages (art. 32)
  - ▶ use of children in the illicit production and trafficking of narcotic drugs and psychotropic substances (art. 33)
  - ▶ sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (art. 34)
  - ▶ sale, trafficking and abduction (art. 35)
  - ▶ other forms of exploitation (art. 36)
  - ▶ sentencing of children, in particular the prohibition of capital punishment and life imprisonment (art. 37 (a)) and the existence of alternative sanctions based on a restorative approach;
  - ▶ children deprived of their liberty, and measures to ensure that any arrest, detention or imprisonment of a child shall be used as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate time and that legal and other assistance is promptly provided (art. 37 (b)–(d))
  - ▶ children in armed conflicts (art. 38), including physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration (art. 39)
  - ▶ physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration (art. 39)
  - ▶ administration of juvenile justice (art. 40), the existence of specialised and separate courts and the applicable minimum age of criminal responsibility<sup>17</sup>

### 2.3.3 Structuring the report

Alternative reports should focus on providing a systematic analysis of the extent to which law, policy and practice in the State party complies with the provisions of the CRC. The key elements of alternative reports include:

1. The **situation analysis**, which should:
  - ▶ Draw upon the widest possible range of reliable sources of knowledge, expertise and experience. The views and experiences of children should be identified and incorporated in the report where possible.
  - ▶ Provide accurate and objective information. The use of data and statistics can help to ensure the Committee receives the appropriate level of detail to be able to make concrete recommendations. References to public documents in confidential reports are particularly useful for the Committee to conduct further research.
  - ▶ Reflect upon the different experiences of children throughout the country, especially if there are differences in legislation, jurisdiction, administration of services, culture, environment, etc.

<sup>17</sup> CRC Treaty Specific Reporting Guidelines, Harmonised according to the Common Core Document [http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/treaty\\_specific\\_guidelines\\_2010.doc](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/treaty_specific_guidelines_2010.doc)

- ▶ Illustrate a gap in law and/or practice using landmark cases or data on violations that highlight systemic weaknesses which need to be strengthened to improve compliance with the CRC.
2. **Comments on the State report**, which should:
- ▶ Provide information on practical challenges and measures that may be lacking in the State report, as the latter is often legalistic in nature.
  - ▶ Offer the NGO/NHRI perspective, for example by highlighting good State practices, as well as identifying gaps and underlining challenges in the implementation of legislation, programmes and policies.
  - ▶ Provide brief updates on the implementation of previous recommendations made by the Committee, where relevant.
3. **Concrete examples**, which should:
- ▶ Illustrate a point using concrete evidence or specific cases,<sup>18</sup> which can be useful for the Committee. This should be very brief and done in a way that is respectful of the privacy rights of those involved in the case.

**Example of using specific information to illustrate a point:**

If children are detained with adults, provide information on the names of the specific detention facilities and respond to key questions, including: How many children are being detained (to get a sense of the scale)? What are the conditions of the detention facilities? How many children are affected, both detained and not detained? Is the situation the same for boys and girls? Are there any groups of children which are over-represented? What have been the consequences of this practice? Is the problem being addressed? If so, how is it being addressed and by whom? What concrete steps would you suggest that the Committee could recommend to the State to address the matter?

4. **Use of photographic images should:**
- ✓ Only be used to illustrate an issue of concern and not be for shock value.
  - ✓ Show the conditions of, for example, school buildings, classrooms, health centres, alternative care settings, detention facilities or other such institutions or physical settings that demonstrate a lack of fulfilment of child rights.
  - ✓ Be clearly labelled and explain what they show.
  - ✗ Not include individual children or violate the privacy rights of a child in any way.
  - ✗ Not be modified in any way, unless it is to ensure the privacy rights of a child (e.g. to blur the faces of children).

**2.3.4 Conclusions and recommendations**

At the end of each section of the report, conclude with a limited number of recommendations that the Committee might consider using to prepare its recommendations to the State. These recommendations are suggested solutions to the issues raised in the respective section of the report and should therefore be concrete, country-specific, precise, realistic and action-orientated. For example, if the report presents weaknesses in education services, instead of recommending the State to ‘improve the education system’, be more precise and suggest specific solutions for how the education system could be improved.

A comprehensive list of all the recommendations can also be compiled and included in an executive summary or as an annex.

<sup>18</sup> As the Committee cannot review cases as part of the CRC reporting process, it is important to provide key elements, not the full details of the case and only as a means of illustrating a point made in the report.

## Information Sources

An alternative report should be based on a broad range of information sources, including:

- ▶ current legislation and government reports on implementation of the CRC and its OPs
- ▶ government policy documents
- ▶ government statistics
- ▶ government budgets
- ▶ records of parliamentary/legislative proceedings
- ▶ domestic case law
- ▶ reports published by organisations and professional bodies working with children
- ▶ published research (government, academic, NGOs, NHRIs), books and periodicals
- ▶ data and research from UN agencies, international organisations and international, regional and national NGOs and NHRIs
- ▶ media reports
- ▶ primary research or case studies on practice and implementation, including interviews and testimonies, focus groups and surveys

### 2.3.5 Other resources from the Committee

General Comments<sup>19</sup> set out the Committee's interpretation of various provisions of the CRC based on the experiences and insights gained during the examination of State party reports. These General Comments are useful resources and can be referred to when drafting an alternative report.

## General Comments

1. The aims of education
2. The role of independent human rights institutions
3. HIV/AIDS and the rights of the child
4. Adolescent health
5. General measures of implementation
6. Treatment of unaccompanied and separated children outside their country of origin
7. Implementing child rights in early childhood
8. Protection from corporal punishment and other cruel or degrading forms of punishment
9. The rights of children with disabilities
10. Children's rights in juvenile justice
11. Indigenous children and their rights under the Convention
12. The right of the child to be heard
13. The right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence
14. The right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration
15. The right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health
16. On State obligations regarding the impact of the business sector on children's rights
17. The right of the child to rest, leisure, play, recreational activities, cultural life and the arts

<sup>19</sup> The Committee on the Rights of the Child's General Comments can be found on their website: [http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/treatybodyexternal/TBSearch.aspx?Lang=en&TreatyID=5&DocTypeID=11](http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/TBSearch.aspx?Lang=en&TreatyID=5&DocTypeID=11) (Link directly to comments) OR (link to homepage) <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CRC/Pages/CRCIndex.aspx>

## 2.4 Practical information for alternative reports

To ensure that the Committee can use the alternative reports effectively, it is important to take into account the following information on formatting, translation and timing.

### 2.4.1 Format

The report should contain the following:

- ▶ Title page
- ▶ Table of contents
- ▶ Page numbers
- ▶ List of key recommendations

While NGOs and NHRIs can prepare reports of the length they want for the national context, all alternative reports submitted to the Committee should be no longer than 20,000 words (approximately 30 pages), excluding annexes. Footnotes can also be used to refer the Committee to further sources of information. While there is no official page limit for the annexes, it is important to keep in mind that the Committee receives a lot of information for each State under review. As such, annexes and sources of further information should be used sparingly in order to ensure the Committee members can understand the key points about the issues addressed in the report.

#### **The title page of the alternative report should clearly indicate the following key information:**

- ▶ Title of the report
- ▶ State party
- ▶ Treaty covered by report (i.e. CRC, OPAC, or OPSC or integrated)
- ▶ Clearly marked as NGO or NHRI report
- ▶ Name of the coalition/organisation(s) submitting the report<sup>20</sup>
- ▶ Contact information
- ▶ If the report is available in more than one language or in a longer version, title of the other/ original reports
- ▶ Clearly state if report is confidential (see section 2.4.5 for more information)
- ▶ Date of publication

### 2.4.2 Language

Reports should be submitted in English. If there is a French or Spanish version of the report, this can also be submitted. While most of the Committee members are not native English speakers, English is the most common working language of the majority of members. To maximise the chances of your report being read by all Committee members, documents submitted in French or Spanish should be translated into English.

The UN only translates the main documents produced by the State party and the Committee, including the State party report, List of Issues and Concluding Observations. The UN does not translate the State's Written Replies, nor the reports received from other sources. NGOs and NHRIs need to translate the documents which they submit to the Committee. If it is not possible to translate the entire report, a summary of the key issues of concern and recommendations should be submitted in English.

<sup>20</sup> If the report is being submitted by many organisations as part of a coalition, the full list of members of the coalition can appear on the inside cover or another page.



Depending on the composition of the Committee, there may be some members who cannot read English and would therefore benefit from a summary in either French or Spanish. If NGOs want all the members of the Committee to be able to read their submission, they should get in touch with Child Rights Connect to find out whether a summary could be useful in French and/or Spanish.

### 2.4.3 Timing

Reports should be submitted three months before the pre-session to ensure that the report is taken into account during the compilation of background documents prepared for the Committee, as well as during the pre-session. Deadlines for the submission of reports are posted on the website of the Committee for each pre-session.<sup>21</sup>

The Committee often has a backlog of reports, which can cause considerable delay in the review schedule. If you know your State is preparing or has sent its report to the Committee, but do not have information on when your State's pre-session will take place, contact Child Rights Connect before preparing or sending the report, to ask about the timeline for your State's review.

To ensure that the Committee has the most up-to-date information at the time of the State review, NGOs and NHRIs should not send their reports at the same time as the State party report. If you send your report too soon, it could end up being out of date by the time the Committee examines it. Instead, reports should be submitted at the time of the deadline on the Committee's website (approximately 3 months before the pre-session) and include information that covers the period from the last Concluding Observations, up to the date of submission of the alternative report.

#### NHRI deadlines

The deadline for NHRI submissions is the same as the one for NGOs. About six months prior to the pre-session (i.e. three months before the deadline), NHRIs and Children's Commissioners receive a letter from the OHCHR inviting them to submit a report to the Committee. NHRIs should not wait to receive this letter before preparing a report. Based on their ongoing monitoring and reporting, they can prepare a report in time and proactively look for the deadline specific to their pre-session on the Committee's website or contact Child Rights Connect ([secretariat@childrightsconnect.org](mailto:secretariat@childrightsconnect.org)) or the CRC secretariat (at [crc@ohchr.org](mailto:crc@ohchr.org)) for confirmation.

### 2.4.4 Submission of the alternative report

Once ready for submission, alternative reports should be sent by email to Child Rights Connect in all available languages.<sup>22</sup> Child Rights Connect can provide comments on the format of a draft to maximise the impact of the report. 22 hard copies of the report should also be sent by post to Child Rights Connect's office.<sup>23</sup> Once received, the reports are provided to the Committee's Secretariat by email and hard copies are delivered in person by Child Rights Connect. The Committee's Secretariat will then include them in all the country files for each State party. Child Rights Connect keeps an inventory of all submissions received.

Child Rights Connect provides support to the Committee Secretariat to coordinate and prepare an inventory of NGO and NHRI submissions. The Secretariat will refer NGOs and NHRIs to Child Rights Connect upon receipt of reports which have been sent directly to them. NGOs and NHRIs who want to send their reports directly to the Secretariat should copy Child Rights Connect on the relevant email, so that we can include the submissions in the inventory of reports.

<sup>21</sup> The deadline for submitting reports and the schedule of the pre-session can be found at: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CRC/Pages/InfoPartners.aspx>

<sup>22</sup> Email of Child Rights Connect Secretariat: [secretariat@childrightsconnect.org](mailto:secretariat@childrightsconnect.org)

<sup>23</sup> If an NGO is unable to send hard copies, Child Rights Connect can make photocopies for the Committee.

### 2.4.5 Confidential and public reports

Child Rights Connect liaises with NGOs and NHRIs to obtain permission to publish the reports on the website of the Committee and the Alternative Report Database.<sup>24</sup> After the pre-session, all reports that have been authorised for publication are uploaded to the Committee's website and the Alternative Report Database. If a report is submitted in confidence, the title page and each subsequent page of the document should be marked 'CONFIDENTIAL'.

NGOs and NHRIs can decide if and when they would like to publicise their reports at national level. NGO and NHRI written submissions are treated as confidential when received by the Committee and are not automatically uploaded on the website of the Committee or the Alternative Report Database. Child Rights Connect will send a publication permission waiver to NGOs and NHRIs when reports are received. Reports will only be published online when a signed waiver is received. These reports are uploaded after the pre-sessional working group is completed.

#### Report Checklist



- ▶ Maximum 20,000 words
- ▶ Title page with all key information
- ▶ Page numbers
- ▶ Table of Contents
- ▶ Marked CONFIDENTIAL on all pages if not for publication
- ▶ Suggested recommendations are marked clearly and stand out under each section
- ▶ A list of all recommendations is attached as an annex to the report
- ▶ Email the report and post 22 hard copies to Child Rights Connect

#### Child Rights Connect

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## 2.5 Reports by UNICEF and UN agencies

United Nations agencies, especially UNICEF, which have country offices in the States parties, often take part in the reporting process. Organisations such as the World Health Organisation, the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the International Labour Organisation and the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) sometimes submit information to the Committee relevant to their specific mandates. Their perspectives complement the reports prepared by the State party, NGOs, NHRIs and children.

### 2.5.1 Role of UNICEF in the reporting process

UNICEF plays a key role in the reporting process. Some of the ways it does this include:

- ▶ advising the government on the role of the Committee and the reporting process;

<sup>24</sup> Child Rights Connect and CRIN Joint Alternative Report Database: <http://www.childrightsconnect.org/index.php/publications-resources/crc#altrep>. This database only includes the reports which the Committee has officially uploaded on its website. The organisations which host the database do not endorse the content of the reports which are posted.

- ▶ advocating for revision and withdrawal of reservations on the CRC and ratification of the Optional Protocols;
- ▶ supporting the translation of the CRC into local languages and its dissemination in adapted versions;
- ▶ supporting efforts to train government officials and other partners on the CRC and the reporting process;
- ▶ encouraging the transparent preparation and timely submission of reports;
- ▶ encouraging broad participation of all relevant ministries and partners in the reporting process, including consultations with other UN agencies, NGOs, NHRIs and children; and
- ▶ providing the State party with research and studies on specific child rights issues and encouraging information sharing.<sup>25</sup>

UNICEF field offices generally prepare a confidential written report for the Committee based on what they see as the priority children's issues in the State under review. At the pre-session UNICEF representatives, if present, make a brief presentation and respond to the Committee's questions together with the NGO and NHRI representatives. They often attend the plenary session as observers.

Where NGOs work together with UNICEF at national level, NGOs can approach UNICEF to discuss possible areas of support during the reporting process. UNICEF country offices often fund alternative reports or travel costs to Geneva for the pre-session or session and could be approached by NGOs to do so. For the pre-session in particular, NGOs and NHRIs may wish to reach out to UNICEF to suggest a preparatory coordination meeting, for example to share information about introductory statements or to agree on key messages to communicate to the Committee.

## 2.6 Child participation

In its General Comment no. 12, *The Right of the Child to be Heard*, the Committee officially recognised the role of child-led organisations and children's representatives in the reporting process. The General Comment states that: "the Committee welcomes written reports and additional oral information submitted by child organisations and children's representatives in the monitoring process of child rights implementation by States parties, and encourages States parties and NGOs to support children to present their views to the Committee."<sup>26</sup>

In recent years, children have taken an increasingly active role in the reporting process of the CRC. Children's views have, until now, been mostly incorporated in the main alternative reports; however, children are increasingly preparing their own submissions for the Committee. Whether as part of an NGO alternative report or as a separate submission, children's views can be communicated to the Committee in the form of a written report, peer research, film, case studies, illustrations, posters and other ways in which they wish to share their views. Children should be encouraged to express their views, give opinions and formulate recommendations about how the CRC is implemented at national level.

Basic requirements for the effective, ethical, and meaningful participation of children in monitoring and reporting processes have been set out by the Committee in its General Comment No. 12, *The Right of the Child to be Heard*. Based on this General Comment, the Committee is developing working methods<sup>27</sup> for child participation in the reporting process to guide children and the organisations which support them in how to take part in it.

<sup>25</sup> UNICEF, Reporting Process to the Committee on the Rights of the Child: a virtual resource tool, January 2011

<sup>26</sup> General Comment No. 12 (2009)  
[http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRC%2fC%2fGC%2f12&Lang=en](http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=CRC%2fC%2fGC%2f12&Lang=en)

<sup>27</sup> These working methods will be available on the Committee's website once they have been adopted.

Having supported and observed child participation in the reporting process in Geneva since it began, Child Rights Connect developed guidelines for children on how to get involved in reporting on their rights<sup>28</sup> as well as for NGOs accompanying children in the reporting process.<sup>29</sup> These guides are based on the best practices which have been observed to ensure that children can take part in an effective, ethical and meaningful way.

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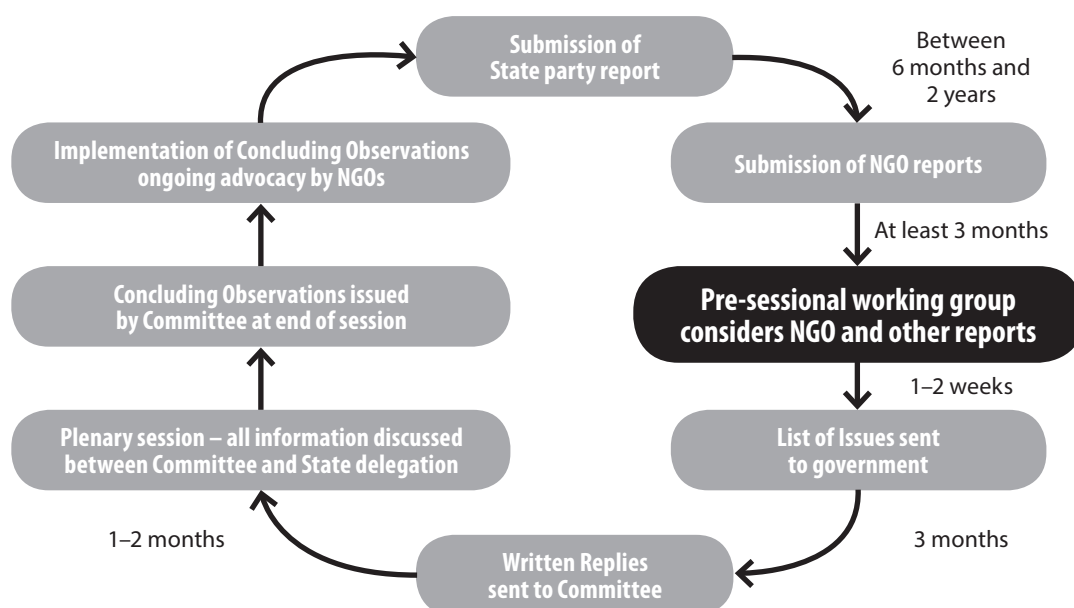
<sup>28</sup> *My pocket guide to CRC reporting – A companion guide to children and adolescents willing to tell the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child about how children’s rights are respected in their country*, NGO Group for the CRC 2011

[http://www.childrightsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/My\\_pocket\\_guide\\_to\\_CRC\\_reporting\\_WEB\\_English.pdf](http://www.childrightsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/My_pocket_guide_to_CRC_reporting_WEB_English.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> *Together with Children – for Children: A guide for non-governmental organisations accompanying children in CRC reporting*, NGO Group for the CRC, 2011

[http://www.childrightsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/With\\_Children\\_For\\_Children\\_WEB\\_english.pdf](http://www.childrightsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/With_Children_For_Children_WEB_english.pdf)

## Step 3: The pre-sessional working group



The pre-sessional working group (pre-session) is a private and confidential meeting of the Committee. This meeting provides the Committee with the opportunity to conduct a preliminary review of the State party report through the examination of reports received from other sources, including NGOs, UNICEF and other UN agencies, NHRIs, children and child-led organisations. Based on the submissions and the pre-session, the Committee identifies the main questions to be discussed with the State party during the plenary session.

### 3.1 NGOs, NHRIs and children’s participation in the pre-session

NGOs and NHRIs who submit reports by the deadline may be invited to participate in the pre-session. Interested NGOs and NHRIs should state clearly in the cover letter accompanying their report if they wish to participate in the pre-session.

Only a limited number of NGOs from each country will be invited to attend. The Committee will base its decision on an evaluation of the written information it receives from NGOs or NHRIs. As the meeting takes the form of a question and answer session, the Committee usually invites national NGOs (especially child rights coalitions) or NHRIs which have prepared comprehensive reports. Authors of thematic reports, especially if they are short, are rarely invited, unless they are covering issues related to the OPSC or OPAC.

The pre-session for the examination of a periodic CRC report lasts 2.5 hours per country. The pre-session for integrated reports (periodic CRC and OP reports) will cover all the relevant treaties in the dialogue. No extra time is specifically devoted to the follow-up on the OPs during the pre-session.

If the Committee is examining initial reports on the OPs together with a CRC report, the Committee will allocate more time to the pre-session to allow for discussions on all the reports, provided it has received information from NGOs, NHRIs or others about the OPs.

### 3.1.1 Who can attend the pre-session?

The pre-session is a private meeting, where only national,<sup>30</sup> regional and international NGOs, NHRIs and child representatives, who have prepared a submission and been formally invited to the meeting, may attend. Representatives from relevant UN agencies (e.g. UNICEF, WHO, UNHCR, ILO and UNESCO) have an open invitation to participate; UNICEF participates in almost all pre-sessions for States where they have country offices.

All participants are asked to respect the confidentiality of the pre-session meeting. Information shared and opinions expressed by all those present should not be made public. No press releases or summary records are issued for the pre-session and the official report of the Committee states only that NGOs and other non-state actors attended the meeting, but does not mention the organisations or individual participants by name. As the meeting is not public, no government representatives, media or other observers may attend.

### 3.1.2 Selecting representatives

During the pre-session, there are a number of issues to cover in a relatively short period of time. NGO and NHRI representatives invited to attend the pre-session should be comfortable making introductory remarks and engaging in an interactive dialogue with the Committee. As the Committee does not allow any observers at the pre-session, all those present in the room are expected to contribute to the discussions.

The NGO and NHRI delegations should be composed of people who were actively involved in the preparation of the alternative report and have extensive knowledge of the CRC<sup>31</sup> and its implementation in the State party. If possible, at least one generalist and one lawyer should represent the NGO or coalition, to ensure that questions can be answered on a broad range of topics, including national legislation, government policies and programmes and priority areas of concern.

Participants in the pre-session should be at ease responding to a multitude<sup>32</sup> of detailed questions; be willing to collaborate with other NGO, NHRI or UN representatives who may be participating in the meeting; and be fluent in understanding and speaking English, French or Spanish (Arabic, Russian and Chinese interpretation is available upon request).

NGOs and NHRIs are encouraged to bring copies of statistics or studies that might be referred to during an oral presentation or that may be of interest to Committee members. Child Rights Connect staff will assist in distributing these to Committee members. The information provided by NGOs and NHRIs may be used for the Committee's preparation of the List of Issues, the State party review and the Concluding Observations.

### 3.1.3 How can children participate?

Children who have contributed to the preparation of a report or another kind of children's submission may participate in the pre-session with the support of the organisation that is facilitating their participation. This provides an opportunity for children to express their views directly to members of the Committee. It is important to note, however, that the pre-session is primarily a technical discussion on the implementation of laws and policies in a fairly formal setting. Children should be aware of the possible content and format of the meeting before agreeing to participate and the outcomes of the reporting process as a whole should be discussed in advance to ensure that they understand what they can expect from engaging in the process. As mentioned above, child participants at the pre-session should have been involved in the preparation of a report or children's submission and should feel comfortable engaging in

<sup>30</sup> National child rights coalitions of NGOs are prioritised, as they have usually prepared a comprehensive report and are often more representative of civil society in the State party.

<sup>31</sup> If reports on the Optional Protocols are being reviewed at the same time, NGO representatives who have reported on these should be able to answer questions about them.

<sup>32</sup> There can be up to 50 or 60 questions on any of the issues covered by the CRC.

an interactive dialogue with the Committee. As for all the other participants in the pre-session, children are expected to respect the confidentiality clause and not disclose what was discussed in the meeting.

In addition to participating directly in the pre-session, a separate one-hour children's meeting for children under the age of 18 can be requested upon submission of the alternative report or children's submission. This meeting usually takes place on the same day as the pre-session and allows for a more informal, flexible environment in which children may feel more comfortable expressing their views. There is, however, no interpretation available as it is outside official meeting time, so NGOs need to bring people who could act as interpreters<sup>33</sup> for this meeting.

Once a child has been registered for the pre-session and/or a children's meeting, Child Rights Connect will liaise directly with the persons facilitating their participation to arrange a briefing and answer any questions the children may have, in advance of coming to Geneva. Child Rights Connect will also meet with the children in person, before their meeting with the Committee, to help familiarise them with the place and answer any remaining questions. Two Committee members will come to greet the children before the children's meeting and answer any questions they may have about the meeting. Finally, Child Rights Connect will accompany the children and their chaperone(s) to the children's meeting and stay with them throughout. The dates and times of these meetings will be confirmed to the children and their chaperones in writing, by Child Rights Connect, before travelling to Geneva.

For more information on children's participation in the pre-session, refer to the guides *My Pocket Guide to CRC Reporting* and *Together with children – for children: a guide for non-governmental organisations accompanying children in CRC reporting*.<sup>34</sup>



**NOTE:** The children's meeting is exclusively for children under the age of 18. Young people over 18 can speak in the pre-session, but not in the children's meeting. It is up to the children to decide who from among the accompanying adults can be present in the children's meeting, including those who can help for interpretation.

### 3.2 Format of the pre-session meeting

The pre-session meetings are part of the formal UN calendar of meetings. Pre-sessions are from 10am to 12.30pm or from 3pm to 5.30pm. These meetings start and end on time, so there is no possibility to prolong the meeting due to late arrivals. If alternative reports have been submitted on an initial report of the OPSC and/or OPAC in addition to reports on the CRC, the meeting time may be extended. While there is no formal procedure for the format of the pre-session meeting, as it depends on the quality of the information which the Committee has received, the following section provides information on what NGOs and NHRIs can expect on the day of the pre-session.



**NOTE:** The Committee's pre-session can only take place during the allocated weeks per year according to the official UN timetable. The pre-session cannot be rescheduled if NGOs or NHRIs have not submitted their reports on time to be invited or have a conflicting engagement.

As the week of the pre-session is known months in advance, NGOs and NHRIs should keep this week free to ensure that they can attend the meeting if they are invited by the Committee.

<sup>33</sup> Child Rights Connect staff can sometimes help with translation into French and Spanish.

<sup>34</sup> At the time of going to print, the Committee was in the process of finalising its guidance for meeting with children in the context of the reporting process. Contact Child Rights Connect to find out if it is available and to receive a copy.

### 3.2.1 Preparatory briefings

One hour before the pre-session, Child Rights Connect holds a briefing for all NGO and NHRI participants to provide detailed information on the format of the meeting, receive copies of the presentations and answer any questions. The Child Rights Connect representative will be present during the pre-session to provide logistical and technical support to participants for the duration of the meeting.

### 3.2.2 Introductory statements

Participants are expected to make a short introductory statement, which highlights a limited number of key areas of concern and update the Committee on any new issues not included in their reports.

- ▶ **Length:** The total NGO speaking time is between 10 and 15 minutes. If more than one person is speaking, the time must be shared amongst speakers. If there is more than one alternative report, the total fifteen minutes will be divided between the different NGOs. The Committee Secretariat decides on the speaking time and order of speakers for NGO introductory statements as well as for NHRIs and children; this information is communicated to participants by Child Rights Connect once all participants have registered for the meeting. UNICEF and other UN agencies will also be allocated speaking time by the Committee Secretariat.
- ▶ **Content:** It is best to focus on a limited number of key issues and not go into detail on the recommendations, which the Committee can read in the report. Participants can give their opinion on the State party report, point out the main problems that children are facing in their country, and provide an update of any new information since the submission of the report. The oral presentation should not provide information about the work of the NGO or NHRI itself, although this information may be distributed in writing to the members of the Committee.
- ▶ **Languages:** During the pre-session there is simultaneous interpretation in English, French and Spanish. Presentations should be made in one of these languages. If the request is received at least one month in advance, the Committee Secretariat can arrange for interpretation into Arabic, Russian or Chinese.
- ▶ **Copies of the statement/report:** Committee members will have been provided with electronic and hard copies of the NGO, NHRI and children's submissions, so it is not necessary to bring copies of your report, or to summarise them in the introductory statement. Ten copies of the introductory statement should be given to Child Rights Connect before the meeting for distribution to the interpreters and key members of the Committee. If you would like all Committee members to have copies for future reference, 25 copies of the introductory statement should be provided to Child Rights Connect during the briefing just before the meeting.

Following the NGO introductory statements, the Chairperson will ask representatives of NHRIs and UN agencies to make their presentations.



**NOTE!** Child Rights Connect does not have offices in the UN building where the pre-session takes place. It is therefore difficult to print or copy statements on the day of the meeting. If NGOs and NHRIs wish to print their statements after they have arrived in Geneva, they should go to Child Rights Connect's office before the pre-session and ask to make copies.

There are no PowerPoint facilities in the Committee's meeting room. If you prefer this style of presentation, you should bring copies of the presentation so that they can be distributed to Committee members and interpreters.



### 3.2.3 Questions and answers

Once the introductory statements are completed, Committee members will comment on or ask questions about the reports and the presentations. The Country Rapporteurs or Country Taskforce,<sup>35</sup> will take the lead on asking the questions. Other Committee members may take the floor later in the meeting to ask questions. Some comments and questions will be general while others may be questions specifically directed to NGOs, NHRIs or UN agencies.



**TIP!** The Committee may ask as many as 50 or more questions, depending on the range of topics to be covered in the meeting. Remember to bring pens and paper to write all the questions down. To save time, it is useful for participants to discuss in advance who will answer questions on which topics and sit with colleagues who might cover similar issues in order to confer during the short break. This will help to maximise your meeting time to address as many of the Committee's questions as possible.

After all questions are raised by Committee members who wish to do so, the Chair will usually call for a short break of 10 to 20 minutes. During this time all participants are encouraged to work together to prepare their responses. All the participants should determine who will answer which questions, grouping them together by theme and agreeing in which order each theme will be addressed. Once the meeting resumes, NGOs, NHRIs, UN agencies and children will be given the opportunity to respond to the questions or comments in the form of an interactive dialogue with the Committee, until the end of the meeting.

#### For further information...

Immediately following the pre-session, inform the Child Rights Connect representative accompanying you during the meeting about which representative of your NGO or NHRI can be contacted by the Committee for further information.

While an individual Committee member might give you their contact details to send updated information, it is important to put Child Rights Connect in copy when sending information, to ensure that all the other Committee members and the Secretariat receive it as well.

<sup>35</sup> The Committee is in the process of revising its working methods and will form Country Taskforces for larger countries, instead of appointing Country Rapporteurs.

**Summary of the pre-session preparation and format**

<p>1 hour before the pre-session meeting</p>	<p>Child Rights Connect will hold a briefing for the participants: NGOs, UNICEF National Committees, children and NHRIs. UNICEF holds its own briefings for its country offices.</p> <p>As part of the briefing, we will show you to the room and help you to set up for the meeting.</p> <p>*N.B. It is not possible to use powerpoint.</p>
<p>The start of the pre-session meeting</p>	<p>The pre-session starts promptly either at 10am or 3pm and lasts 2.5 hours. Time will be added for discussion of initial OP reports. Meetings that start late will end on time.</p> <p>The Chairperson will invite participants to make introductory remarks that highlight key issues.</p> <p>The NGOs usually speak first, followed by NHRIs and UN agencies.<sup>a</sup> Child Rights Connect will inform you of the amount of speaking time and order of speakers before the meeting.</p>
<p>During the pre-session meeting</p>	<p>The Committee will ask a series of questions and engage in a dialogue with all participants in order to gain a better understanding of the situation of children in the country.</p> <p>Simultaneous interpretation is provided in English, French and Spanish. Arabic, Chinese or Russian translation can be provided if requested at least one month in advance.</p> <p>Child Rights Connect staff will be present during the meeting to facilitate your participation and answer any questions you may have.</p>
<p>After the pre-session meeting</p>	<p>After the pre-session, the Committee will meet in private to adopt the List of Issues. This will include a list of questions that will be sent to the State about one week after the pre-session. The State must reply in writing by the deadline indicated in the document.</p> <p>Once edited and available for dissemination, Child Rights Connect will send a copy of the List of Issues to all participants by email and provide information about the next steps.</p>

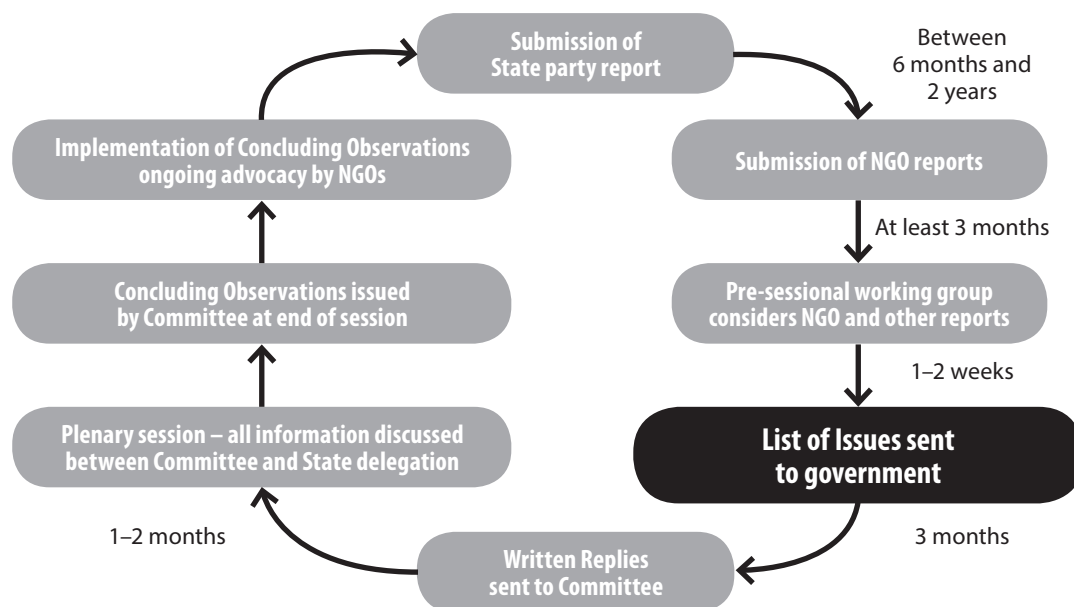
<sup>a</sup> Children usually make their presentations during the children’s meeting, but should they wish to make another presentation during the pre-session, they should let Child Rights Connect know. This presentation should not be the same one as the one made during the children’s meeting.

### **Role of Child Rights Connect**

Child Rights Connect supports independent NGOs (especially child rights coalitions) and NHRIs, as well as children, to engage effectively throughout the entire reporting process. It does this by:

- ▶ Contacting national coalitions/NGOs to encourage them to prepare a report
- ▶ Providing guidelines on how to prepare an effective alternative report
- ▶ Providing advice, technical assistance and training on preparing alternative reports either by e-mail or through training workshops
- ▶ Commenting on draft alternative reports, if requested
- ▶ Providing advice on the entire reporting process, including how to prepare for the pre-session and using the documents produced by the Committee
- ▶ Ensuring two-way communication between NGOs, NHRIs and children, and the Committee and its Secretariat, throughout the reporting process
- ▶ Transmitting electronic and printed alternative reports to the Committee's Secretariat and adding them to the inventory of reports
- ▶ Organising logistics for the participation of those NGOs that we fund to attend the pre-session and session
- ▶ Requesting visa invitation letters from the Committee Secretariat on behalf of all participants that require them and providing letters of support from Child Rights Connect to the relevant Embassy or Consulate
- ▶ Briefing NGOs, NHRIs and children prior to the pre-session and session
- ▶ Facilitating the participation of NGOs, NHRIs and children in the pre-session and session

## Step 4: List of Issues



Following the pre-session, the Committee prepares a “List of Issues” – a list of questions on which additional information is sought – which is forwarded to the State party along with a formal invitation to meet with the Committee. This is a public document that is made available on the website of the Committee.<sup>36</sup>



**TIP!** If area(s) of concern raised in the alternative reports are not included in the List of Issues, this does not mean that they will not be discussed in the State review or addressed in the Concluding Observations. It simply means that the Committee does not require further information from the State on the topic in order to prepare for the State review.

The information provided in writing by NGOs, UN agencies, NHRIs and children, as well as orally during the pre-session, may be used to compile the List of Issues. The questions generally seek to clarify factual issues such as data and legislation. If there has been substantial delay between the submission of the report and the review, the Committee may request updated data and information on new developments. The Committee requests Written Replies from the State in at least English, French or Spanish, by a date indicated in the first paragraph of the document, normally approximately 1 to 2 months before the review.

For CRC reports, the List of Issues is composed of three sections:

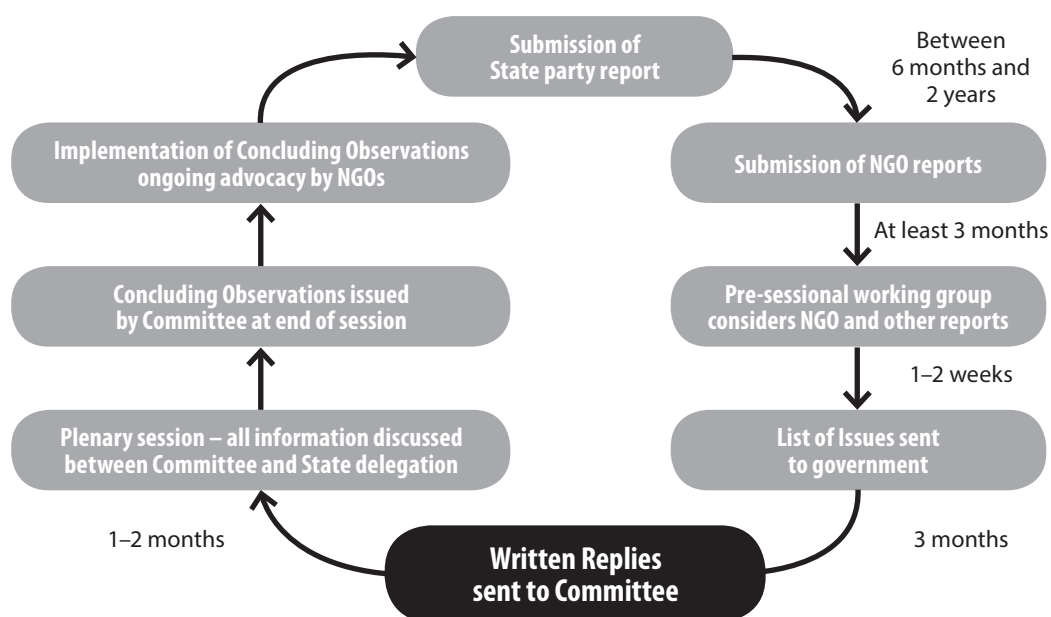
- ▶ The first section requests that States respond to questions on the implementation of the CRC, including on the follow-up of previous Concluding Observations. The questions generally seek to clarify issues with regards to legislation, policies and programmes. The State is requested to respond in a maximum of 30 pages.

<sup>36</sup> Website of the Committee: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CRC/Pages/CRCIndex.aspx>

- ▶ The second section requests that States update their reports in terms of new bills or laws, and their respective regulations; new institutions (and their mandates) or institutional reforms; recently introduced policies, programmes and action plans and their scope and financing; and recent ratifications of human rights instruments. The State is requested to respond in a maximum of 3 pages.
- ▶ The final section asks the State to provide data and statistics, especially disaggregated statistics, which may be missing or incomplete. There is no page limit for this section.

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## Step 5: Submission of the State Written Replies



NGOs, NHRIs and UNICEF may contribute to the preparation of the Written Replies, if such assistance is requested by the government. The Written Replies of the government are made public and are published on the website of the Committee.<sup>37</sup> If there is something of particular importance that has not already been raised in the alternative report or during the pre-session meeting, NGOs and NHRIs may prepare brief comments on the List of Issues and submit these to the Committee via Child Rights Connect prior to the plenary session.

NGOs and NHRIs are advised to formulate their written responses to the List of Issues after the State's Written Replies have been sent in, if possible, so that they can provide an analysis or any missing information. The State may not keep to the deadline for the submission of the Written Replies to the Committee. If there is a considerable delay, it is worth sending responses to the List of Issues anyway, to ensure that the Committee has time to consider the information in advance of the plenary session.

Remember to mark any confidential documents in response to the List of Issues with the word 'CONFIDENTIAL' on all pages.

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<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*

### Between the pre-session and the plenary session

During this period, the State selects the members of the official delegation for the plenary session. The composition of the delegation makes a critical difference to the success of the dialogue with the Committee and, later, to the follow-up to the Committee's Concluding Observations.

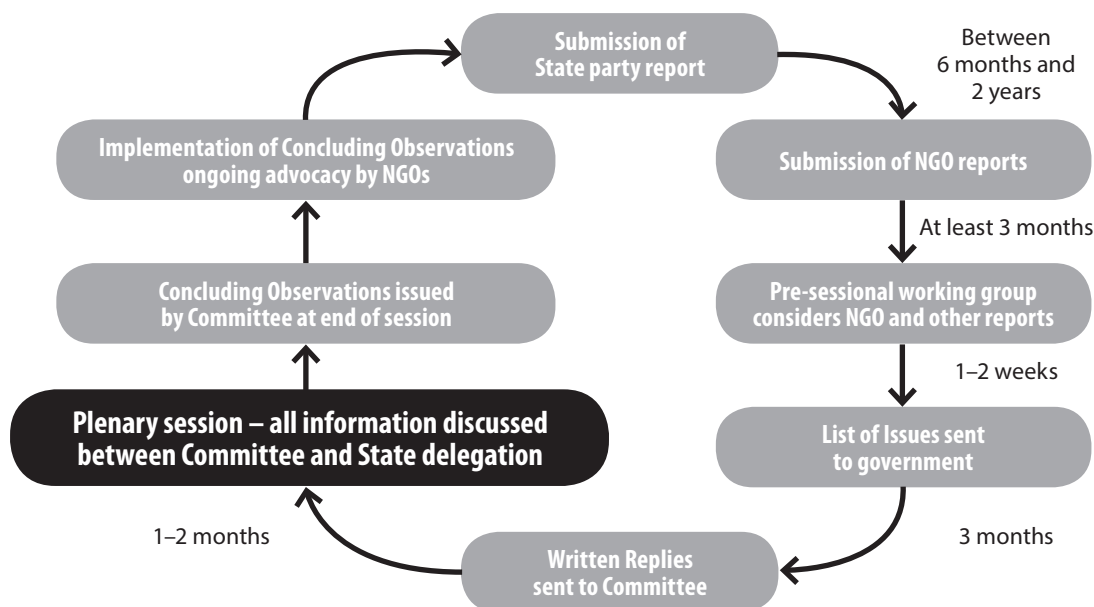
The delegation should represent a variety of relevant government departments and institutions<sup>38</sup> and include both high-level officials who have authority to speak on behalf of the government, as well as those whose work is more directly related to the implementation of the CRC and its Optional Protocols.

Between the pre-session and the plenary session, NGOs and NHRIs can carry out the following activities, depending on their assessment of what is possible in the country where they work:

- ▶ Confirm the dates for the plenary session with relevant Ministries and emphasise the importance of sending a high-level and knowledgeable delegation.
- ▶ Meet with members of the government delegation and any other key persons prior to the plenary session to discuss ways in which NGO and NHRIs could cooperate with the government to address critical problems affecting children. This can help to clarify the role that NGOs and NHRIs could play and reinforce important issues which may not have received sufficient recognition in the State report.
- ▶ Identify in advance key government departments and institutions as well as officials responsible for implementing the Concluding Observations as they may differ from those who will be attending the plenary session.
- ▶ NGOs, UN agencies, such as UNICEF, and NHRIs could meet to discuss the upcoming plenary session, as well as dissemination and follow-up strategies for the Concluding Observations. They could also meet with other stakeholders, including children, to prepare a broader advocacy strategy for the follow-up phase.
- ▶ Organise a public event, such as a press conference, to raise public awareness about the upcoming State review and its possible implications, as well as the recommendations which NGOs, NHRIs, children and others made to the Committee.
- ▶ Consider inviting a Committee member to the country to meet with non-State actors, in particular children. To find out if a Committee member is available, contact the Committee Secretariat by email.
- ▶ Raise awareness among all levels of government, as well as civil society and the public about the live webcast of the meeting.
- ▶ Ensure that the media has access to the State party report and, if appropriate, the alternative reports, and encourage on-going media coverage of the meeting with the Committee. The plenary session can be a good opportunity for public awareness-raising and debate on child rights' issues.
- ▶ Discuss the composition of an NGO, child and NHRI delegation who will attend the plenary session as observers.
- ▶ Submit additional information to the Committee, if needed, to clarify issues raised during the pre-session, to provide written responses to questions that remain unanswered or to respond to the List of Issues, to comment on the Written Replies or raise awareness of any major new developments since the pre-session. At this stage of the process, all additional information should be concise.

<sup>38</sup> There is often a tendency to send representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, as it is considered to be formal interaction with the UN. However, ministries that deal with domestic affairs are usually more relevant to respond to issues related to the implementation of child rights in a country.

## Step 6: Plenary session



### 6.1 Plenary procedures

The review of a State under the CRC or integrated CRC and OP report takes place over one full day. An additional half day (one three-hour meeting) will be added for the review of an initial OPAC or OPSC report.<sup>39</sup> In the case of periodic reports on the OPs for a State which has not ratified the CRC, one full day is given for the review of both OPs.

The Plenary session for the CRC periodic reports is divided into two halves with an extended break either overnight or during the two-hour lunch period depending on how the meetings are scheduled.

The government delegation is invited to make a short opening statement at the beginning of the review, which is followed by a series of questions posed by the Country Taskforce. The first 5 clusters of the CRC are discussed in the first half of the session; questions on the second 4 clusters are asked just before the extended break and are answered in the second half of the session. Similar to the pre-session, the Country Rapporteurs or Country Taskforce will take the lead in asking the questions.

The Chair of the Committee will announce breaks during the sessions to allow time for the government delegation to organise its replies to the questions. This can be done according to themes and the delegation can respond to the Committee's questions and concerns in any order. Committee members may interrupt the government speakers to ask follow-up questions, making it an interactive dialogue.

The plenary session is held in English, French and Spanish, although the other three UN languages (Russian, Arabic and Chinese) are made available if they are more relevant to the country under consideration.

<sup>39</sup> For more information on the reporting procedure under the OPAC and OPSC, refer to the NGO Group publication, 'Reporting on the OPSC and OPAC: A Guide for Non-Governmental Organisations', available on our website or in hard copy on request.



### 6.1.1 Should NGOs and NHRIs attend the plenary session?

NGOs and NHRIs should consider attending the plenary session, which is a public meeting. Although they do not have a right to speak during the meeting, they may participate as observers in order to obtain a comprehensive picture of the dialogue with the government. It can also be an invaluable opportunity to meet the government representatives in a setting where child rights are being discussed in depth, as it can provide a strong basis for follow-up advocacy and joint activities.

If NGOs or NHRIs have something in particular to update the Committee about since the pre-session, it may be possible to meet with Committee members informally before or during the plenary session. The Committee does not meet formally with NGOs during the session.

Although summary records of the discussion are produced, these contain a summary of the proceedings rather than a verbatim record of the discussion. The summary records are made available in French or English following the session.



**NOTE!** Child Rights Connect prepares unofficial summaries of the meetings, called Country Reports, which are sent to the NGOs and NHRIs which were supported by Child Rights Connect. These reports are also made available on the Child Rights Connect website.<sup>40</sup>

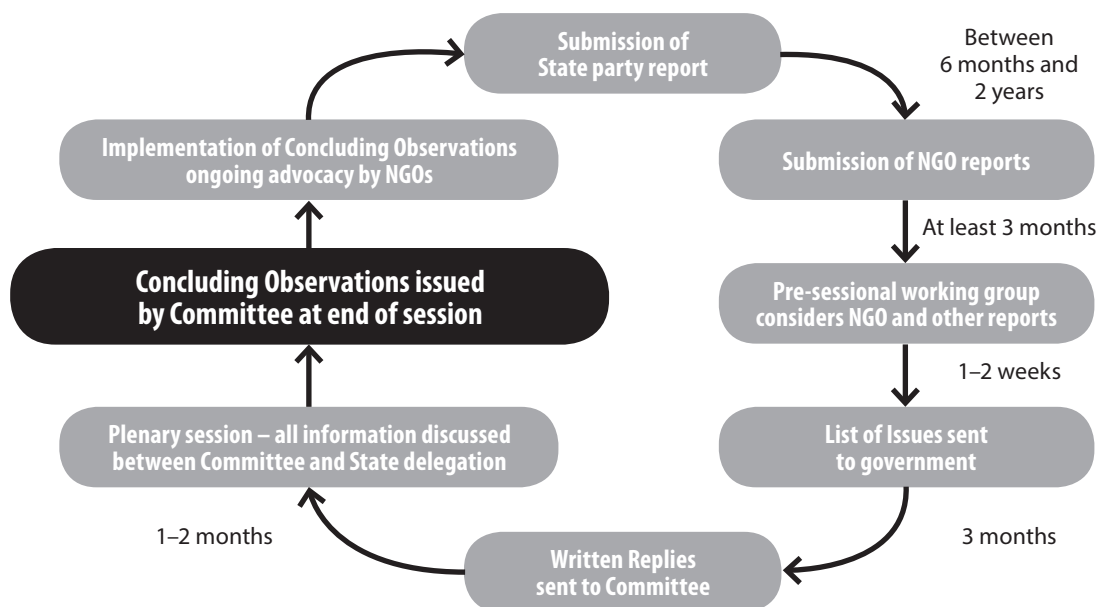
### 6.1.2 Webcast

As part of a short-term project, Child Rights Connect webcasts all public State reviews by the Committee. Live streams and archived videos are available at [www.treatybodywebcast.org](http://www.treatybodywebcast.org). The webcast has already helped to raise awareness about the Committee's review of States and live streams have been watched by NGOs, UN agency country teams, as well as government and NHRI officials across the world. Archived videos can be used as a basis for awareness-raising and training on the work of the Committee, or for advocacy activities to follow up on the Committee's recommendations.

The webcast services will eventually be provided by the OHCHR in order to ensure consistent quality and access on the UN website.

<sup>40</sup> Child Rights Connect's unofficial country reports for each session:  
<http://www.childrightsconnect.org/index.php/publications-resources/crc#countriesum>

## Step 7: Concluding Observations



On the last day of a session, the Committee adopts the Concluding Observations for all States reviewed during that session. These Concluding Observations point out the progress achieved, the main areas of concern and recommendations for the implementation of the CRC and the OPs by States. The Concluding Observations are public documents that will be made available on the website of the Committee soon after the session<sup>41</sup> and are also sent to both the State party and the United Nations General Assembly.



**NOTE!** Child Rights Connect sends the Concluding Observations by email to all NGOs and NHRIs who have submitted written information to the Committee through Child Rights Connect.

### 7.1 Structure of the Concluding Observations

The first two sections of the Concluding Observations are generally succinct, welcoming the submission of the State report, appreciating the dialogue with the government delegation and noting the adoption of relevant laws, programmes and plans of action. The remaining sections focus on the areas of concern and the recommendations. Each concern is followed by corresponding recommendations.

Concluding Observations under the CRC are usually divided into the same clusters as the reporting guidelines sets out for the State report:<sup>42</sup> general measures of implementation; definition of the child; general principles; civil rights and freedoms; violence against children, family environment and alternative care; disability, basic health and welfare; education, leisure and cultural activities;

<sup>41</sup> <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CRC/Pages/CRCIndex.aspx>

<sup>42</sup> At the time of writing this guide, the Committee was developing a ninth cluster on violence against children and the Committee's reporting guidelines for States were to be updated accordingly. Visit the website of the Committee to view the most recent version of the Committee's reporting guidelines for States.

and special protection measures. Within each cluster, sub-headings are provided in order to better identify the issue to be followed up on.

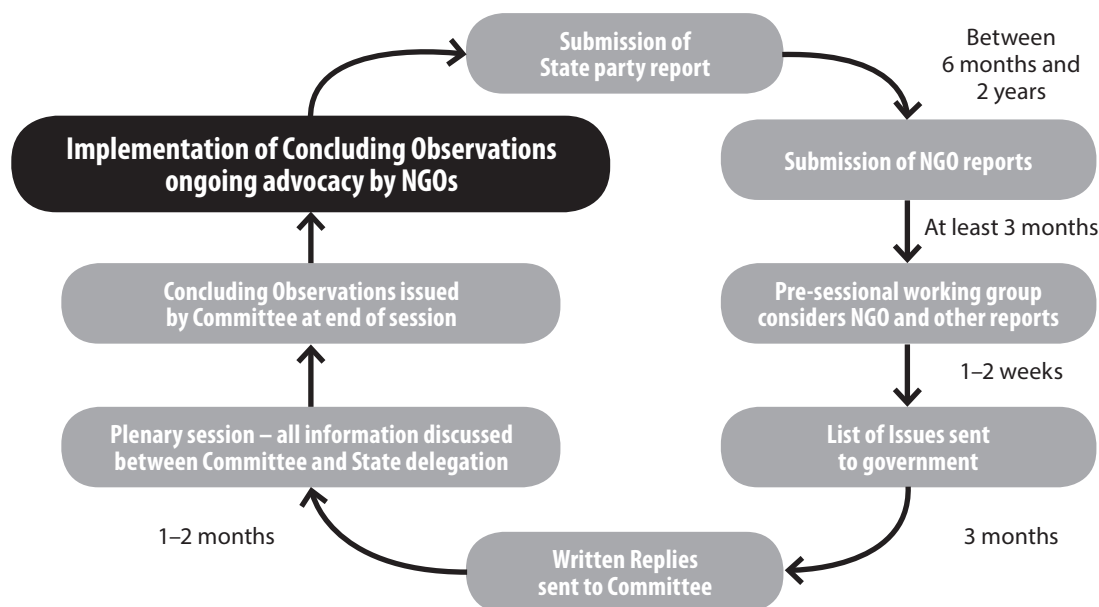
Unlike some of the other treaty bodies, the Concluding Observations do not request States to submit additional information on specific points as part of a follow-up procedure. They do, however, indicate the date for the submission of the next periodic report.

The Concluding Observations are initially made available in English on the Committee's website. They are then translated into French and Spanish in the months following the session. If another UN language, namely Arabic, Chinese or Russian, is more relevant to the State, the Concluding Observations will be translated into that language as well.

In order to maintain the momentum of the review and raise awareness about the process, NGOs and NHRIs can encourage the State to translate the Concluding Observations into the national language(s) after the session and disseminate them broadly. NGOs and NHRIs can also translate the Concluding Observations into national languages and produce simplified versions that are accessible to a broader audience, including children.

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## Step 8: Follow-up to Concluding Observations



The Committee does not have a formal follow-up procedure, which would provide for the periodic assessment of the implementation of certain recommendations. At each periodic review, the Committee takes into account previous Concluding Observations and compares these with the progress detailed in the State report.

The Concluding Observations set out recommendations for how States can improve their compliance with the CRC. For NGOs, NHRIs and others working at the national level, follow-up to the Concluding Observations can be integrated into on-going advocacy activities, using them as a tool to reinforce long-term advocacy objectives and drive the child rights agenda forward. It is, therefore, important to think of other partners who might not have been involved in the reporting process, but who could assist with the follow-up to Concluding Observations. These could include the media, professional organisations concerned with a particular issue, parliamentarians, religious or community leaders, parents or family organisations, politicians and law makers.

At the national level, the Committee depends on independent national monitoring mechanisms to ensure that its recommendations are being implemented by the State. Although States are responsible for implementing the CRC and the OPs, NGOs and NHRIs should regularly monitor and assess the implementation of Concluding Observations to ensure that the State is meeting its obligations.

### 8.1 Data collection

In order to effectively monitor the implementation of the CRC and OPs, NGOs and NHRIs should consistently collect and analyse disaggregated data and information. This can be done by conducting research, developing indicators and benchmarks and collecting information on violations of children's rights. Data collection and analysis allows NGOs and NHRIs to determine the extent to which legislation, policy and practice are in compliance with the CRC and the OPs. It also permits weaknesses to be identified and recommendations to be made on what could be done to improve the situation at national level. Data collection can draw upon the widest

possible sources of knowledge, expertise and experience and be based on the broadest possible range of information sources, including from children themselves.

Data can be obtained in a variety of ways including through interviews, observation, the collection of relevant documents, use of photographic and other recording devices, forensic examination, surveys or a combination of any of these.<sup>43</sup>

If possible, NGOs and NHRIs can work closely with the State in the development of national data collection systems. They can encourage States to develop indicators and implement a disaggregated data collection system. Data should be regularly collected and analysed in order to monitor progress.

## 8.2 Working with government

Depending on the national context, NGOs and NHRIs can encourage the government to follow up on the Committee's recommendations. They can meet government officials, as well as UNICEF, other relevant UN agencies and children, in order to discuss the Concluding Observations and the steps which can be taken to implement them. NGOs and NHRIs can also offer to work with the government in the elaboration of legislation, policy developments and strategies to implement the Committee's recommendations.

Information from alternative reports may have been used in the discussions between the government and the Committee, which allows issues of concern to be brought to the attention of the government through an additional channel. Furthermore, recommendations from the alternative report may be reflected in the Committee's Concluding Observations. If the Committee is making similar recommendations to NGOs and NHRIs, the Concluding Observations can become an unparalleled tool to lend strength to NGOs and NHRIs advocating for priority issues to be addressed.

## 8.3 Visits by Committee Members

NGOs and NHRIs may invite Committee members to conduct a field visit in order to meet with government officials, NGOs, NHRIs, children and other stakeholders to discuss steps to be taken to follow up on the Committee's recommendations. These visits may be official and in response to an invitation issued by the State party. When linked to follow-up, they may be organised by the government, the OHCHR, UNICEF, NGOs or NHRIs and take place following the consideration of the State party report in order to provide support to implement the recommendations.<sup>44</sup> In some cases, members of more than one treaty body may conduct a country visit at the same time. Committee members may also conduct informal visits, which do not involve an official invitation by the government.

It is important to note that Committee members have no budget to make country visits. Any invitation to visit a country should therefore include an offer to provide funding for the visit.

## 8.4 Tools and guides

NGOs and NHRIs can develop tools and guides to support the monitoring process. Translating the State party report, alternative reports and Concluding Observations into national and local languages and making them available in accessible formats is a way to ensure that basic information and tools with which to monitor progress can be used by different stakeholders. The Concluding Observations should be widely disseminated to those who were involved in the reporting process, as well as the broader child rights community, including through the creation of blogs, podcasts and films.

<sup>43</sup> Guzman, Manuel and Verstappen, Bert, *What is Monitoring?*, HURIDOCs, 2003, <http://www.huridocs.org/wp-content/uploads/2010/08/whatismonitoring-eng.pdf>

<sup>44</sup> Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, Report on the Working Methods of the Human Rights Treaty Bodies Relating to the State party Reporting Process, Guidelines on Country Visits Endorsed by the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Annex HRI/MC/2005/4, 2005 [http://www.bayefsky.com/methods/hri\\_mc\\_2005\\_4.pdf](http://www.bayefsky.com/methods/hri_mc_2005_4.pdf)

As part of follow-up to Concluding Observations, NGOs and NHRIs may take up research activities as a basis for further areas of work where there is a lack of data or knowledge on a given issue. Annual or biannual progress reports can be produced and campaigns on priority themes from the Concluding Observations launched. These tools and guides help to contribute to a better understanding amongst stakeholders about the importance of ensuring that the CRC and the OPs are being implemented at national level and form the basis of training and capacity building.

#### 8.4.1 Case studies

Working closely with national, regional and international NGOs throughout the reporting cycle, Child Rights Connect has a unique overview of good examples of follow-up activities being carried out around the world. To promote good practice and share examples of how the recommendations contained in the Concluding Observations have been translated into concrete activities, Child Rights Connect gathers case studies and publishes them on its website at <http://www.childrightsconnect.org/index.php/publications-resources/crc>

Some examples of activities that NGOs can undertake include:

- ▶ promote the ratification of the CRC and OPs;
- ▶ advocate for the review and withdrawal of all reservations to the CRC and the OPs, where relevant;
- ▶ conduct awareness-raising activities, public campaigns and training programmes;
- ▶ support children in carrying out their own follow-up activities as part of on-going child participation in advocacy at national level;
- ▶ approach UNICEF to discuss inclusion of the Concluding Observations and recommendations in their advocacy and programmes activities;
- ▶ examine existing and draft legislation for compliance with the CRC and the OPs;
- ▶ conduct a budget analysis at all levels of government to determine how much is being directly or indirectly allocated to implement children's rights;<sup>45</sup>
- ▶ conduct studies on issues of concern, especially if they are neglected or emerging issues;
- ▶ produce regular reports on the situation of children;
- ▶ use the media to gauge public opinion and encourage awareness of children's rights; and
- ▶ form thematic groups of NGOs, for example within a coalition, which could focus on particular sets of the Committee's recommendations.<sup>46</sup>

<sup>45</sup> See for instance: *The African Report on Child Well-Being 2011: Budgeting for Children*  
<http://www.africanchildforum.org/africanreport/>

<sup>46</sup> *Networking for Children's Rights: A Guide for NGOs*, NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 2001  
<http://www.crin.org/docs/resources/publications/NGOCRC-a-guide-for-NGOs.pdf>

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# Conclusion

Integrating the Committee’s reporting cycle into NGO and NHRI on-going advocacy or monitoring strategies is one of many ways to harness the influence of the international human rights system to support the advancement of children’s human rights at national level. Child Rights Connect provides tools and publications that explain how to identify other possible entry points through which to raise children’s issues before other international human rights mechanisms. Contact Child Rights Connect to ask us more about this, as well as for examples of good practice on how to engage effectively with the international human rights system as a whole.

Contact Child Rights Connect to pose further questions and let us know about alternative reporting, follow-up to Concluding Observations and other activities being carried out by NGOs and NHRIs. We hope that this guide offers a comprehensive description of the reporting cycle and how to engage effectively with the Committee. Each stage of the cycle is of equal importance, although some stages will demand more time and resources than others. We would be happy to be in contact directly to provide technical assistance, regardless of which stage of the reporting cycle your country is at.

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# Resources

## UN Documentation

Convention on the Rights of the Child

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CRC.aspx>

Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/OPACCRC.aspx>

Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography.

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/OPSCCRC.aspx>

Information on ratifications, reservations, and declarations of the CRC can be found at

[http://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg\\_no=IV-11&chapter=4&lang=en](http://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-11&chapter=4&lang=en)

General Guidelines regarding the form and content of initial reports to be submitted by States Parties under article 44, paragraph 1(a) to the Convention on the Rights of the Child,

[http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/Guidelines\\_initial\\_reports\\_CRC.pdf](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/Guidelines_initial_reports_CRC.pdf)

United Nations, Compilation of guidelines on the form and content of reports to be submitted by State parties to the international human rights treaties, 2009 (HRI/GEN/2/Rev6)

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/icm-mc/docs/9th/HRI-GE-2-Rev6.doc>

CRC Treaty Specific Reporting Guidelines, Harmonised according to the Common Core Document

[http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/treaty\\_specific\\_guidelines\\_2010.doc](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/treaty_specific_guidelines_2010.doc)

Information on ratifications, reservations and declarations of the OPAC can be found at

[http://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg\\_no=IV-11-b&chapter=4&lang=en](http://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-11-b&chapter=4&lang=en)

Revised Guidelines regarding initial reports to be submitted by States parties under article 8, paragraph 1, of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict

[http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/CRC.C.OPAC.2\\_en.pdf](http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/CRC.C.OPAC.2_en.pdf)

Information on ratifications, reservations and declarations of the OPSC can be found at

[http://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg\\_no=IV-11-c&chapter=4&lang=en](http://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-11-c&chapter=4&lang=en)

Revised Guidelines regarding initial reports to be submitted by States parties under article 12, paragraph 1, of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography

[http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?key=92g0+9FnI5fX/ePqHxWOblX2P5GEb99twsPrh/K2aa8ca+rWNDc4HydXFyv8hknx&Lang=en](http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?key=92g0+9FnI5fX/ePqHxWOblX2P5GEb99twsPrh/K2aa8ca+rWNDc4HydXFyv8hknx&Lang=en)

State parties reports, summary records, and concluding observations can be found at

[http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/TreatyBodyExternal/SessionsList.aspx?Treaty=CRC](http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/TreatyBodyExternal/SessionsList.aspx?Treaty=CRC)

Implementation Handbook for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Third Edition, UNICEF, 2007 (not available electronically)



Implementation Handbook for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Implementation Checklists, UNICEF, 2007

<http://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Implementation%20Checklists.pdf>

## Guides and Tools on the CRC Reporting Process

Reporting on the OPSC and OPAC: A guide for Non-Governmental Organisations, NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 2010

[http://www.childrightsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Guide\\_OP\\_EN\\_web.pdf](http://www.childrightsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/Guide_OP_EN_web.pdf)

Guide for NGOs reporting to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child on the implementation of the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 2006

[http://www.crin.org/docs/FileManager/NGOGroup/OPSC\\_Guide\\_for\\_NGOs.pdf](http://www.crin.org/docs/FileManager/NGOGroup/OPSC_Guide_for_NGOs.pdf)

Guide to the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict, Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers and UNICEF, 2003

[http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/option\\_protocol\\_conflict.pdf](http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/option_protocol_conflict.pdf)

Reporting on Violence against Children: A Thematic Guide for Non-Governmental Organisations reporting to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 2007

[http://www.childrightsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/NGO\\_Guidelines\\_reporting\\_VAC\\_to\\_CRC\\_2008.pdf](http://www.childrightsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/NGO_Guidelines_reporting_VAC_to_CRC_2008.pdf)

The Use of Concluding Observations for Monitoring the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 2005

<http://www.childrightsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/WPConcludingObs.pdf>

A profile of National Child Rights Coalitions: Findings of the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child Survey of National Child Rights Coalitions, NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 2004

[http://www.childrightsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/CRIN-NGOCRC\\_WP1\\_en.pdf](http://www.childrightsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/CRIN-NGOCRC_WP1_en.pdf)

Networking for Children's Rights: A Guide for NGOs, NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, 2001

<http://www.childrightsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/NGOCRC-a-guide-for-NGOs.pdf>

NGO reports that have been submitted to the Committee on the Rights of the Child can be found at

<http://www.crin.org/Alternative-reports/index.asp>

## Guides and Tools on Child Participation

Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 12, The Right of the Child to be Heard, 2009

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/AdvanceVersions/CRC-C-GC-12.doc>

My Pocket Guide to CRC Reporting, NGO Group for the CRC, 2011

[http://www.childrightsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/My\\_pocket\\_guide\\_to\\_CRC\\_reporting\\_WEB\\_English.pdf](http://www.childrightsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/My_pocket_guide_to_CRC_reporting_WEB_English.pdf)

Together with children -- for children: A guide for non-governmental organizations accompanying children in CRC reporting, NGO Group for the CRC, 2011

[http://www.childrightsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/With\\_Children\\_For\\_Children\\_WEB\\_english.pdf](http://www.childrightsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/With_Children_For_Children_WEB_english.pdf)

Children as change agents: Guidelines for child participation in periodic reporting on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, World Vision, 2008

**[http://www.crin.org/docs/Guidelines\\_for\\_Child\\_Participation\\_in\\_CRC\\_Reporting.pdf](http://www.crin.org/docs/Guidelines_for_Child_Participation_in_CRC_Reporting.pdf)**

Minimum Standards for Consulting with Children, Inter-Agency Working Group on Children's Participation, 2007

**<http://plan-international.org/files/global/publications/participation/ministandards.pdf>**

Operations Manual on Children's Participation in Consultations, Inter-Agency Working Group on Children's Participation, 2007

**<http://plan-international.org/files/global/publications/participation/operationsmanual2.pdf>**

So you want to consult with children? A toolkit of good practice, Save the Children, 2003

**[http://www.savethechildren.net/alliance/resources/childconsult\\_toolkit\\_final.pdf](http://www.savethechildren.net/alliance/resources/childconsult_toolkit_final.pdf)**



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