It’s all about children

Seven good examples and ten steps to meaningful children’s participation in reporting to the Committee on the Rights of the Child

Child Rights Governance
The involvement of children in the monitoring process to the Committee on the Rights of the Child has particular relevance. The Committee welcomes written reports and additional oral information submitted by child organisations, and children’s representatives in the monitoring process in CRC reporting. By sharing these examples, Save the Children either has supported networks and child rights coalitions in their reporting processes, or directly helped children share their thoughts, experiences and concerns. Combining forces via networks and child rights coalitions is a general trend, as the quantitative overview of CRC reporting with child involvement demonstrates.

The overview is included to provide a sense of how much is actually happening, and how in many ways children may be engaged – from child-led processes where children spontaneously take the initiative, to reports where adults have chosen to include children’s voices either directly as quotes and illustrations or indirectly in e.g. recommendations. Although far from exhaustive, the overview does show a clear trend over the years towards increasing children’s participation in the all-important reporting process.

Last but not least, it’s all about children contains ten steps to meaningful children’s participation in reporting to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, that have been comprised based on the reports included in this booklet, other related documents listed in the bibliography and valuable advice given during telephone conversations, e-mail exchanges and questionnaires filled in by helpful colleagues and children around the world.

The terms child-led, child-produced and child-informed are not used to label the individual reports, because none of the field level practitioners or children interviewed in the course of the research for it’s all about children used them. Labelling different approaches also carries the risk of passing on the message that some ways are more correct and genuine than others if one is called e.g. “truly child-led” and another “only”. The message here is that there is no single right way, because it all depends on the context, the resources, the timeframe and the capacities of everyone involved.
The role of the Committee on the Rights of the Child

The Committee on the Rights of the Child is a body of independent experts that monitors implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child by States Parties. It also monitors implementation of two optional protocols to the Convention on involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

All States Parties are obliged to submit regular reports to the Committee on how the rights are being implemented. States must report initially two years after acceding to the Convention and then every five years. The Committee examines each report and addresses its concerns and recommendations to the States Parties in the form of “concluding observations”.

Excerpts adapted from: www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/

A right, an advantage, a value and lots of fun

Experiences with earnest child participation show that the benefits of involving children far outweigh any benefits derived from keeping children away from decisions and actions influencing their own lives. Children are highly capable of analysing how particular decisions or actions will serve their best interests, and their considerations ensure that projects, programmes and services are relevant and sustainable. Children are the real experts on their own lives and act as important change makers for their peers and for the community at large.

Although harder to measure, almost all children who experience meaningful participation immensely improve their self-esteem and gain much more respect in their local communities. Through participation children become empowered and confident as well as gain insight and understanding. Children who are united grow, mature and become more tolerant, empathic and independent. This is why participation is not a process; it’s a value. However, if you want to ensure children’s meaningful participation, being clear about why and how you want to involve them and what you want to achieve by involving them is important. Child-led activities should be a beautiful addition to the children’s lives. They have to be fun, relevant and make sense in the context, and they should never make problems for them.

Adapted from: From child labour to children in charge. A handbook on child-led organisation and advocacy on child labour by Lotte Ladegaard/Save the Children Sweden-Denmark in Bangladesh

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The reporting process

1. The State report

The reporting process begins with the development of the State report. The Committee on the Rights of the Child has provided guidelines on good practice for the process as well as provided details about the nature of the information sought.

The initial report is due two years after the CRC enters into force in the country. Thereafter, periodic reports are due every five years. Upon receipt, the Committee will set a date for consideration of the State report at the next available session. If the State does not submit on time, the Committee will send a reminder.

The State report should provide the Committee with a comprehensive review of the child rights situation in the country, covering legislative, administrative, judicial and any other measures undertaken to implement the Convention, backed up with detailed disaggregated data. States must also report on how they have responded to the Committee’s recommendations from the previous reporting session.

State reports should be no longer than 120 pages and divided into eight thematic “clusters” of rights:

I. General Measures of Implementation
II. Definition of the Child
III. General Principles
IV. Civil Rights and Freedoms
V. Family Environment and Alternative Care
VI. Basic Health and Welfare
VII. Education, Leisure and Cultural Activities
VIII. Special Protection Measures

Within each of these clusters the following information must be provided:

Follow-up: The first paragraph in each cluster should detail measures undertaken with regard to the Committee’s previous concluding observations.

Comprehensive National Programmes – Monitoring: Subsequent paragraphs should furnish sufficient information to provide the Committee with a full understanding of the implementation of the Convention in the country as well as the mechanisms established to monitor progress.

Allocation of Budgetary and Other Resources: States must provide information on the amount and percentage of the national budget and other resources devoted annually to children.

Statistical Data: Disaggregated by gender, disability, geographical area, age etc., indicating trends and highlighting groups requiring special attention.

Factors and Difficulties: The last paragraph in each cluster should describe any factors and difficulties affecting the fullness of the State’s obligations as well as information on targets set for the future.

This cluster format is adhered to throughout the reporting process. In addition to avoiding undue repetition, this method allows for continuity throughout the process as well as easier analysis of all of the relevant submissions and meetings. State and CSO reports, the Pre-Sessional Working Group and Plenary Session meetings, Lists of Issues and Written Replies and the Committee’s concluding observations all follow the same thematic format.

Following submission, the report is edited, translated into the three working languages of the Committee, distributed to specialised agencies and made available to CSOs.

2. CSO supplementary reports

The CRC specifically allows for reports from “other competent bodies”, including CSOs and children’s groups. These reports help to fill in the gaps in the State report and clarify misleading or incorrect information. They also provide other perspectives which may assist the Committee in understanding the climate of rights enjoyment.

Supplementary reports should be submitted within six months of the State report and three months prior to the pre-session to ensure they are taken into account, translated etc.

3. The Pre-Sessional Working Group (“the pre-session”)

The Pre-Sessional Working Group is a private meeting between the Committee, CSOs and other international organisations that takes place around four months prior to the session with the government to discuss the State report and the supplementary reports. The pre-session is a chance for CSOs and children to highlight the main areas of concern; give their opinions of the State report and add any information since the submission of their supplementary reports. Only CSOs that have submitted written information will be invited to attend. Meetings are confidential and no summary records are produced.

4. List of issues

The pre-session enables the Committee to identify a “list of issues” which identifies further information required from the government. This frequently focuses on the need for disaggregated data on violations of rights and lists the key areas of concern that the Committee will address at the plenary.

5. Written replies

This document contains the written answers to the list of issues and must be submitted at least one month prior to the plenary session. CSOs may feed into the written replies or they may submit their own supplementary information. Information from the State and CSO reports, the pre-session and the written replies will frame the discussion between the Committee and the government.

6. The plenary session

This is the main meeting between the government and the Committee that takes place over a full day (two 3-hour sessions). The Committee will ask a series of questions in the same thematic format as the State report and the government will be given the opportunity to respond.

Although this meeting is public, CSOs may only attend as observers.

7. Concluding observations

This is the outcome document of the reporting process. Following again the thematic structure of the State report, the Committee first highlights positive aspects, then goes on to outline its concerns and its recommendations and sets the date for the next periodic report.

The concluding observations should set an agenda for action over the coming five years. Each reporting session should not be seen in isolation or as a one-off event. Rather, it is a cycle that should set realistic agendas to affect change for children.

Save the Children is involved in the reporting process, because:

• Children have the right to be heard and have their views given due weight.
• The reporting process enables Save the Children to increase child participation in advocacy and hold duty bearers to account.
• Child participation provides a vehicle to strengthen capacity amongst governments, Committee members, partners, and children, to ensure children are heard.
• Facilitating child participation is a core value for Save the Children.
• The process provides potential for a highly visible and practical demonstration of child participation that can and has changed attitudes at the local and national level.

Excerpts adapted from:
• The Starter Pack is being published in an updated version available upon request together with “It’s all about children.”
A learning process

Although it’s all about children in no way claims to be a complete review of child-led and child-informed CRC reporting, a clear trend has appeared during the research process. Over the past decade, children have become gradually more involved in supplementary reporting on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and organisations that involved children in reporting years ago visibly have learned from their initial experiences and today have chosen approaches with high levels of child participation.

Since 2007, children in at least six countries have initiated and been extensively involved in the full range of processes pertaining to the development of child-led supplementary reports. Representatives of these children have also travelled to Geneva to participate in meetings with the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Many more children’s voices are heard in child-informed reports, which to some degree have emerged from the development of child-led supplementary reports. Many children’s voices are heard in child-informed reports, which to some degree have emerged from the development of child-led supplementary reports.

It’s all about children

It’s all about children

Many more examples of children’s participation in supplementary reporting obviously exist, but the goal of this guide is to provide an inspirational easy-to-overview publication, thus precluding the execution of an all-inclusive study. Of the included reports many have been forwarded by Save the Children, partner organisations, networks and child rights coalitions in different parts of the world. Others have been found via Google searches and cursory reviews of 2010 supplementary reports on www.crin.org, which serves more than 2,100 organisations in 150 countries. Although the search category “CRC report by children” does in fact exist on www.crin.org, no child-led or child-informed reports were available there at the time of writing. A joint, online site that makes these reports publicly accessible would be one way to ease future knowledge sharing.

In the reports analysed for It’s all about children, the approaches differ greatly. For example, the number of children consulted varied from a few dozen to more than 12,000. How in-depth the children’s participation was, how different age groups were heard, where they came from, their socio-economic background, how they were selected and who they represented come across clearly in some reports, but not in all of them. Reports where only a few children were involved or that lacked information may or may not be a true reflection of the child rights situation in a certain area, and the question remains as to whether a few dozen children actually represent all children in a country. These questions and concerns are worth highlighting in order for others to consider and learn from.

During the research process, most representatives from the organisations involved in the development of the reports in fact stated that their ambition was to learn from their initial experiences and use them as a point of departure for even more child participation in the next reporting period.

Various ways of involving children

“Children’s participation is always a spontaneous process,” was the instinctive response to the first draft of It’s all about children from a Save the Children child participation facilitator. While spontaneity may be perceived as the ideal way, comparatively few of the reports analysed have come about totally prompted by children.

More often, child-led and child-informed supplementary CRC reporting is a process involving children as well as adults in the development of shared ideas, knowledge sharing, capacity building, joint collection of information and analysis, and cooperation between different organisations, networks and child rights coalitions.

Generally, when a CSO wants to involve children in CRC reporting it cooperates with other organisations and institutions with direct access to specific groups of children such as refugees, children with disabilities or out-of-school children. These contacts lead to consulta-

ions, focus groups and sometimes individual interviews that are included as either quotations in the CSO report or incorporated as an annex. Often, children who are already involved with the organisation participate in consultations as researchers and otherwise in the reporting process. When a larger number of children are involved, participation often takes place in the form of questionnaires distributed via other organisations, institutions and clubs as well as in print media and on the Internet. Some organisations also encourage children to participate via radio and TV.

In addition to containing information from CSOs, the reports are also based on information from government officials, CSOs, representatives from organisations and individuals with experience relevant to the report, religious leaders and individuals and secondary sources such as CSO reports and studies.
In 2009, the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Children’s Rights Alliance for England asked 37 children and young people between the ages of 10-22, as well as 26 CSOs, about their experiences of engaging children in CRC reporting. Between them, the CSOs have supported over 43,000 children in engaging in activities related to the CRC reporting process.

Children felt that it was extremely important to submit their own evidence to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, in addition to the evidence provided by adults. Fifty-two per cent of CSOs reported that children had written their own report for the Committee. One CSO described the children’s motivation to do so as follows: “Children’s views were included in the CSO report but [the children] did not think this was enough.”

The numbers of children engaged in the reporting process varied considerably from CSO to CSO, presumably depending on the type and extent of funding available and the depth of experience of the CSO concerned. On average, CSOs involved 2,500 children in their reporting process activities; the smallest number of children involved was six and the largest 15,000. Typically, a core group of children led the work, with larger numbers taking part through research projects.

Children said they most commonly took part in learning about children’s rights (77 per cent), talking to the Committee on the Rights of the Child in Geneva (55 per cent) and taking action on the concluding observations (39 per cent). Only 3 per cent had contributed to the State report, and only 13 per cent observed the State party examination in Geneva.

Decisions about how children should be involved in these activities were generally made jointly between children and the CSOs supporting them. Over one-third of the sample cited this as their preferred method. 28 per cent of children said the CSO they worked with had decided how they should be involved in the reporting process, while a further 25 per cent said that the children made these decisions independently.

The Geneva delegations were most commonly comprised of two children with good presentation skills, experience at representing the views of other children and passionate about children’s rights.

Sixty-three per cent of children have continued to campaign on child’s rights issues, and 32 per cent are already helping with work to prepare for the next CRC examination. Unfortunately, few children (19 per cent) appear to be working with the State to address the Committee’s concluding observations.

Awareness raising – both among children and among the general public – was generally seen as an area in need of much further development by CSOs. This included much wider dissemination of reports written by children and circulating accessible versions of the concluding observations to children and other stakeholders. The role of the media in this was deemed particularly important. Some CSOs reflected on the importance of recording their experiences by documenting each stage of the process.

Most CSOs noted the need to obtain specific project funding for work to engage children in human rights monitoring with sufficient time and human resources to capacity build partner organisations. The role of the media in this was deemed particularly important. Some CSOs reflected on the importance of recording their experiences by documenting each stage of the process.

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Adapted excerpts from:
The committee welcomes the readiness of the State Party to collaborate with the non-governmental organization community, including children’s organizations, which was reflected in the drafting process of the government’s report and in the presence during the dialogue of a child representative of a non-governmental organization.

Concluding observation after consideration of the initial report of Nepal at the CRC Committee’s 301st to 303rd meetings 1996


- Written by: State Party.
- Focus: General CRC.
- Participants: 30 children participated in National Children’s Seminar. 264 children from 31 districts participated in children’s camps organised by a team of five to seven children from child-led organizations. Age groups 7-18 years. Participants included orphans, bonded labourers, children with disabilities, refugees, street children and children from underprivileged and marginalised communities.
- Research methods: A five-day National Children’s Seminar on CRC was organised by UNICEF and CSOs. 30 children with different ethnic, religious, geographical and socio-economic backgrounds participated. After the seminar the children returned home to interview other children and document everything in photos and writing. Announcements were made on TV, radio and in newspapers encouraging children to send their impressions on CRC in the form of articles, paintings, poems and songs. Later, the 30 children returned to another National Children’s Seminar attended by the Speaker of the House of Representatives and other high-ranking officials and run by the children themselves. They organised a press conference and discussion session with members of parliament and the National Planning Commission and formed a national networking group. Children’s camps were held at regional level. To finalise the report, a working committee of the National Planning Commission was formed with members of the Law Reform Commission, ministries, CSOs and child representatives.
- Analysis, writing and contents: Comments and suggestions on the draft were collected through nine regional public hearings for adults and children. Interaction with parliamentarians, correspondence with concerned ministries, representatives of external development partners and members of the National Human Rights Commission. A website containing the draft report, notices in the main national daily press and discussions during a national workshop provided further comments.
- Follow-up: A girl representing a child-led group accompanied the government delegation. Upon returning home, she took part in designing follow-up to take forward the points raised in the concluding observations. She also shared her knowledge with child-led organisations. An action plan was made in 1996 to follow up on the concluding observations. More than 10,000 children’s organisations with over 200,000 members are active in the communities and at district level claiming their rights and raising their voices when their rights are violated.
- Impact: Children have become part of the decision process at community level. At national level, children’s recommendations help in adopting policies, plans and programmes, e.g. there is now a general practice of involving children in finalising the National Plan of Action for Children.

Photo: Karin Beate Nosterud

Photo: Dan Adler

Photo: Red Barnet
The table below presents some general tendencies in the level of children’s participation in the 35 reports reviewed. The vivid shade of color shows the most child-led processes with the highest level of participation. As the shading in the table becomes lighter, the level of child involvement and number of children involved is lower. An otherwise totally child-led process may appear in a lighter area, if the number of children being heard or directly participating is exceedingly low, or in a relatively low number of children participating in an already known collection of the children’s rights situation in the country in question.

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Written by children</th>
<th>Written by a大人 or by children with a high level of adult facilitation</th>
<th>Planned, researched and written by adults in adult language</th>
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The first time I learned about my rights

“I was quite nervous when representing Korean children in Geneva. But after finishing, I felt a sense of satisfaction. If I had not been involved in this report, I wouldn’t have been aware of my own rights, because it was the first time I learned about child rights. Now, I know what our rights are and try to uphold them every day.

I think my own rights are not violated that much compared with children who are in worse situations. I thank the Committee members for paying sincere attention to our voices.”

Yunhee Kim, 15, member of the Hapcheon Community Centre for Dreaming Children, Korea.
Seven in-depth examples to learn from

Korea, Moldova, Mozambique, Norway, Peru, Senegal and Sri Lanka are the seven countries that have been selected for an exhaustive survey, because they differ in their approaches and are poles apart in the way they each represent their region and contexts.

At least one similar conclusion can be drawn, however, from the seven cases. Child participation in CRC reporting is highly time consuming. The cases also confirm that involving children in CRC reporting is absolutely worth it regardless of the time and resources it takes.

A review of the entire process in Moldova was recently carried out, and in the process of researching it’s all about children in Korea, Mozambique, Senegal, Peru and Bangladesh, children responded to the following questions: “What has already changed in your community and country after you were involved in the CRC reporting?”; “What did you learn personally by being involved in the reporting process?” and “Some time has passed since the reporting period. How do you feel about your involvement in the CRC reporting today?”

In addition to sharing the feeling that they have done an important job, all of the children say that the impact went way beyond the empowerment of the individual participant and the groups they belong to. Peruvian children recommended in their report that the Children’s Ombudsman involved children in his work. Today, the ombudsman has established an advisory council with children and carries out regular consultations with the council as a part of his working plan. The review from Moldova even plays with ideas about the future, asking: What will the countries of these children look like when they are parents?

Almost all drawn up by coalitions and child rights networks, the seven case countries are based on a thorough assessment of the children’s own reports and adult reports with elements of child participation, other supporting and related documents, phone interviews with adults responsible for the facilitation of the participatory processes and questionnaires filled out by children.

Seven in-depth examples to learn from


Written by: Adults who listened to the children and documented their voices. Adult interpretations were minimised to ensure that the thoughts of the children were respected as faithfully as possible.

Focus: Not all the rights specified in the CRC are covered. Instead, the report deals with rights related to what the children mentioned in the course of the research.

Participants: In total, 671 children from the age of four to under the age of 18. Of these children, 564 participated in an Internet survey. These children are not affiliated with any particular group.

There were 107 children (50 males, 57 females) who participated in a child rights education programme and in-depth interviews. These children live in relatively poor environments or are somehow vulnerable to the rapid changes taking place in Korean society. Children live under economic hardship, in institutions and in rural areas. There are also the children of North Korean defector families, children from families with mixed nationalities and children with disabilities as well as children with parents who are migrant workers, refugees as well as a single teenage mother.

Research methods: Over a period of one year, children living under various circumstances were asked what living in Korea is like as a child, how much they know about their rights, what rights are being violated, and what should be done to improve the situation.

An Internet survey was carried out via a children’s educational website, www.jrnaver.com, and the answers from 564 respondents out of 3,071 respondents were used in the report. A child rights education programme comprising five to ten sessions over a period of two to five months was offered to groups of children. The methods applied consisted of, e.g. games, quizzes and debates, depending on the age of the children, and various activities like swimming and other leisure activities along with a three-day camp. All of the events were designed not only to listen to children, but also to empower them.

The programme was conducted with the help of trained volunteers who are members of a university child rights expert group under the leadership of professional researchers.

Among the children picked out for individual in-depth interviews or small group interviews, some were children with disabilities, one was a refugee, one a single teenage mother; and some had parents who were migrant workers.

All of the children who participated were carefully told what the purpose of the programme and the interviews was. There were also clear procedures to obtain the consent of the children and their parents to use of their statements, art work, voices, images and videos. All of the material in the report is anonymised to protect the personal identity of the child.
Analysis, writing and contents: Describes briefly the reporting process and the CRC history of Korea. Although the country has submitted two reports already and is awaiting the review of its 3rd and 4th combined report, this is the first time that children themselves talk about the realities of the rights of the child in Korea.

Save the Children Korea prepared the supplementary report to ensure that the best interest of the child will be better reflected in the Committee’s recommendations to the government.

The children involved in the supplementary reporting pointed out that the right to participation is one of the key principles of the CRC, yet it is one of the least respected rights in Korea. The report is especially colourful, easy to read and full of illustrations. There are also numerous tables, photos from the child rights education programme, drawings, letters and wishes from children about solutions to the rights that are not respected in Korea.

Apart from the written report, a video was produced to present the voices of the children more vividly.

Follow-up: No direct follow-up has taken place yet, as the reporting and reviewing process is still on-going. However, Save the Children Korea is planning to translate the concluding observations into a child-friendly version and distribute it. Later, an international forum discussing the ways of implementing the CRC will probably be held, and a country rapporteur from the CRC Committee may be invited.

However, many CRC related activities linked to the children’s recommendations have been carried out. For example, child reports and videos have been distributed to people who work for children’s rights, e.g. government officials, policy makers, social workers, professors and other professionals, to raise their awareness of children’s rights.

Save the Children Korea will also launch an anti-discrimination campaign based on the opinions of the children who were consulted during the process of making the child report. Children from multi-cultural families, i.e. where one parent has a non-Korean background, pointed out that there is increasing discrimination towards them, which means more education in this area is necessary.

To encourage children’s participation in the campaign, Save the Children Korea will run role-play classes in several schools with the help of a professional children’s theatre and encourage the children to do their own plays. Save the Children Korea will also make a comprehensive anti-discrimination play for the public based on the children’s ideas.

Some of the children are also considering organising regular meetings in their towns to discuss not only human rights but also to study the humanities and liberal arts together.

Impact: Two child representatives participated in the Committee’s pre-sessional meeting in February 2010. Ahead of the pre-session, the children participated in a child rights educational programme run by Save the Children Korea. Following the programme, there was a one-day workshop to elect representatives. The children were selected by their friends and teachers.

As a result of the children’s participation, some of the issues the representatives raised were included in the List of Issues, e.g., “Please explain how any inequalities caused by the difference in the budgets of local governments for children are addressed.” This concern is being addressed by the Committee, because child representatives from rural areas have pointed out the lack of play areas in their communities.

They have requested more cultural centres, play grounds, basketball courts and other types of leisure areas.

The children have also expressed concern about discrimination based on race, social origin, physical characteristics, gender, age and especially poor grades. The children suggested that a compulsory anti-discrimination programme be incorporated into the public education system. In the List of Issues, the Committee writes, “Please provide information on awareness-raising and public education campaigns and programmes carried out to combat discriminatory attitudes towards children, in particular owing to gender, nationality, disability, birth and appearance, and on measures to prohibit discrimination and help children victims of discrimination.”

Issues like violence as a means of teaching or forcing regulations onto children at home and in school are also addressed in the List of Issues.

Otherwise, it is a little early to assess the impact of the children’s participation on the implementation of CRC, because the reporting and reviewing procedure is still on-going.

Challenges: The child report was written by the adult who listened to the children and documented their voices. However, Save the Children Korea feels that the next report should be documented and written by children, because it is their right, and the children could learn more about their rights if they are part of the entire process.

As this is time consuming, a children’s project team will be established in advance.
An very special experience

“There are lots of changes in my life. I’ve started to consider my friends’ positions from their points of view. I’ve also started to manage my temper and think about my friends’ rights when I feel the urge to insult them.”

“I hope people will pay attention to the voices of children. They think children’s opinions are not important.”

“It was a very special experience for me. I am very grateful for this experience. I will protect children’s rights when I grow up.”

Children who participated in the reporting process in Korea

In Moldova, two supplementary reports were prepared in a short time. They are described individually, because the second report is as an extension of the first one, and because the level of the children’s participation visibly increased from the first to the second report, confirming that children’s participation and the focus on ensuring representativity improves concurrently with experience and learning.


Written by: Children facilitated by adults as a part of the CSO supplementary reporting process. The report underlines that children have been involved in CRC reporting in Moldova for the very first time.

Focus: Non-discrimination, family environment, protection from violence and abuse, medical assistance, education, freedom of expression, access to information, free time and leisure.

The reporting was carried out for:
- Children to become familiar with their peers’ opinions and to get involved in child rights monitoring,
- Parents, caregivers, teachers and other professionals to consult children and to take into consideration their opinions in any matter concerning them,
- Decision makers to find out what children think of present social services and to take into account children’s opinions when developing policies and legislation.

Participants:
- Children who were identified by the Child Rights Information Centre (CRIC) and partners in 14 districts via the District Departments of Education, Youth and Sports; school administrations; teachers; and community services for children and youth. To enable the process, the children were identified by the Child Rights Information Centre, analysed the report drafted by the CRIC team and added the ideas collected from peers. They also worked out a list of recommendations.
- The children worked in pairs, in small groups, in plenum and as individuals. A variety of icebreakers, low-key games, music and movies were included.
- Prior to the first consultation an adapted version of the CRC was as well as the concluding observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child were shared with the children.

Follow-up: Two children travelled to Geneva to participate in the pre-session with the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Afterwards, the children decided that they would like to be consulted on a permanent basis and not only every two consultation workshops moderated by three adults experienced in child participation in decision making and conducting studies utilizing participatory methods. Two adult supervisors ensured the participants’ security and comfort during the consultations.

Analysis, writing and contents: The CRIC team synthesized the information gathered from the first stage of the consultations and prepared a draft report.

During the second consultation the children identified the main characteristics of the present situation of the rights of the child in Moldova, analysed the report drafted by the CRIC team and added the ideas collected from peers. They also worked out a list of recommendations.

The report is based on quoted statements from children. Other quotations are based on word of mouth and second hand information. Some of the quotes are very powerful, but as they are not substantiated by facts and figures, it is difficult to identify if it is just a matter of one case, or if it is a wider problem, e.g. “Many children are adopted by foreigners and they end up being trafficked or forced into panhandling.” There are some concluding remarks in the report, but they are also not substantiated by numbers.

Two children travelled to Geneva to participate in the pre-session with the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Afterwards, the children decided that they would like to be consulted on a permanent basis and not only every
five years. This led to the project Children’s Monitoring of their Rights Moldova, a more systematic child-led CRC monitoring and the subsequent production of the second report. Truth voiced by children. Children’s report on the respect of the Convention on the Rights of the Child in the Republic of Moldova.

Impact: The children noticed that their report was on the Committee’s table during the pre-session, and when the Committee took into consideration the majority of the children’s recommendations, they were immensely impressed.

Challenges: According to the Review of “Children’s Monitoring of their Rights Moldova 2010” final draft carried out by Peter Dixon, a significant constraint revolved around child interaction with adults who were insufficiently prepared in relation to children’s rights.

When writing articles, giving interviews and during personal interaction the children had to learn to get their message across in a way that minimised the risk of an adverse response. There are examples of children demand - ing rights at school and at home that elicited negative reactions and thus were counterproductive. Parents also worried that children demanding their rights at school would be penalised. As a result, the CRIC had to make sure that children’s identities were kept out of articles.

Another challenge was to select two children to go to Geneva when the children were invited after the submission of the first report. Due to insufficient resources, bringing all of the children was not possible, so one criterion became language, which posed numerous problems.

A 15-year old girl involved in the entire process was chosen to participate in the pre-session. Responding to a questionnaire used by the NGO Group for the CRC while working out guidelines for child involvement in CRC reporting, she wrote: “I don’t understand very well English, but I tried to be understood and to understand what the adults were talking about.”

Comprehending the documents in the reporting process and the pre-session was also difficult, because everything is written for adults and the reporting process is complicated. Time was another challenge, because the children also had other responsibilities such as education, work and family.

The review suggests that good preparation is essential. Diplomacy and negotiating skills must be developed, and the children should have access to supportive resource people whenever they need it. Parents also have to be equipped with proper information and included in networking, meet - ings, problem solving etc.

Analysis, writing and contents:

The tools used included writing, holding public speeches, plea letters, posters, media interviews and the development of a webpage. At the end of the seventh workshop, each member formulated conclusions about the rights they had monitored the previous year.

The group also conducted a study to investigate other children’s opinions about the respect shown for their rights. A questionnaire was developed and disseminated amongst peers in different regions; the children analysed the data and developed conclusions and recommendations. The study was to determine children’s CRC knowledge to identify current and desired sources of information utilised by children; to assess to what extent child rights are respected; to determine how much information children have about institutions that can be addressed in rights violations; and to gather children’s suggestions on actions to ensure respect for child rights.

Analysis, writing and contents: Statistical analysis of the data from the questionnaire was performed by the CRC; which identified major tendencies. Conclusions and recommendations were formulated in a workshop with the children. Throughout the process, the children were guided by adult facilitators.

The report contains children’s drawings, writings and photos from the process. Children’s personal findings, observations, experiences and accounts of child rights viola - tions are also included. This time, the names of the child contributors are mentioned by name in the colophon, and a group photo of all the children is included at the end.

Follow-up: Via the project Children’s Monitoring of their Rights Moldova, the children met 13 times in workshops each lasting three-four days. In addition to learning about and developing their own indicators and monitoring tools, the children collected child rights information in their communities.

The child rights monitoring indicators formulated by the children now constitute the contents of a Guide on child rights monitoring, while the children’s report is being used as a tool to advocate for children’s rights towards other children, parents, teachers, adults and decision makers. The children’s motto is, “In Moldova everything should start off on the RIGHT (foot). The RIGHT of the child.”

The children also have shared the concluding observations with other children, and throughout the process they worked closely with a media partner supporting the children in approaching different media for the purpose of creating awareness on child rights via articles, radio and TV. On the eve of the twentieth anniversary of the adoption of the CRC, the children presented the study during a press conference and a television show.
Furthermore, they organised various events to inform other children about how to know and protect their rights. They held speeches and they contributed to the group’s information bulletin, *Child Rights Official Monitor in Moldova*. The children also met with influential people at local and national levels, including the Children’s Ombudsman, who participated in one of the children’s workshops.

The follow-up is still on-going. The plan is to use the recommendations from the Review of “Children's Monitoring of their Rights Moldova 2010” to decentralise the process to make it more widespread and powerful via local groups. This requires, for example, local capacity building.

The plan is also to involve children in national authorities’ monitoring of CRC, but only after continued awareness raising towards the authorities. So far, the authorities do not have the capacity to involve children.

The children will report regularly again in the future – and annually on specific issues, which may be compiled in the report sent to the Committee in Geneva every five years.

**Impact:** In order to reflect and learn from experiences from the project, and subsequently contribute to the establishment of a long-term strategy for children to monitor their rights and to disseminate the experiences and lessons learnt to other actors involved in child rights work, the Review of “Children’s Monitoring of their Rights Moldova 2010” was compiled. The children’s reporting is part of the project, and the review contains several examples of its impact.

The review concludes that the project and child involvement in reporting are contributing to profound social and political changes that involve timeframes generational in nature. Two years in a young person’s life is a considerable period. To meet every two months in a supportive environment that encourages critical discussion and exposure to a far wider worldview and to be tasked to engage with a wide range of stakeholders is bound to have quite an impact on individual lives, concludes the review, asking almost rhetorically: Twenty years from now, when these children are parents, what do you hope will be the status of the rights of the child?

While the children obviously have become highly aware of their rights, they also have developed a larger vocabulary, problem solving skills, observation abilities and know-how to draw attention to child rights violations. In their own words they have become more tolerant and respectful of other people’s opinions. This is confirmed by the children’s parents, who cherish that their offspring have learned to organise their own time, are confident, mature, analytical and responsible. Parents as well as children appreciate the many new friendships struck up during the process.

At a wider level, the project has helped put issues on the government agenda, into the mainstream media and brought issues that adults might not normally see out into the open and thereby possibly influencing policy. Support offered to the children by the media agency UMATA is routinely referred to by the media, academics and legal professionals.

Interviews with government officials clearly show that child participation is valued and already constitutes a useful stream of information and insight for decision makers, serving to reinforce the work of those who are working to improve children’s lives.

A significant achievement is the credibility children’s voices have gained in government processes. When children presented their perspectives in Geneva, it caused surprise amongst the government representatives. Previously, children had simply not been taken seriously. A meeting with the Parliamentary Committee took this a step further in an official public event where the *Truth Voiced by Children* was acknowledged and resulted in a permanent child rights protection mechanism being initiated.

The process has also kick-started the development of decentralised monitoring of children’s rights and an exploration of the means to create a template of child rights sensitive indicators that could be adapted by a range of child rights actors.

**Challenges:** The follow-up of the Committee’s concluding observations was difficult, because Moldova’s government did not print and distribute the recommendations until one and a half years later in August 2010. The CRIC also find follow-up difficult as child rights awareness is weak in Moldova. Subsequently, the CRIC have decided to focus on the development of government awareness first.

Written by: Adults with children's input included
Focus: General CRC.
Participants: The children's report is included as an annex in the CSO supplementary report prepared by 67 civil society organisations led by the national network of children's organisations Rede da Criança. 45 children in Maputo City and Maputo province, 47 children in Nampula and 27 in Zambézia were interviewed in group sessions for the report. These children included members of school clubs, the Child Parliament working with children's rights and theatre groups as well as random school children outside clubs. All of the children participated in information gathering training prior to the interviews so that they also could include the viewpoints of their peers.

The interviews are an update of information gathered for a report previously worked out when the State report was due, but delayed.

Research methods: To ensure wider participation of civil society, Rede da Criança facilitated a process of consultations, meetings with the media and communication via its website, involving 67 organisations and the Child Parliament, a body promoted and recognised by the government and tasked to the Ministry of Women and Social Action. The members were elected by children from communities, districts, provinces and on a national level.

The data collection was based on a literature review of previous studies and reports, interviews with individuals, institutions and children, group meetings with civil society organisations as well as empirical observations in the four provinces with the largest population density.

Analysis, writing and contents: The children's report is a six-page annex to the CSO supplementary report analysing 2002-2006, which is the government reporting period. But as the government delayed its report, the CSO report also includes more recent findings to avoid out-dated information.

The children's report is generally summed up by adults, and at times in a very adult language, i.e. “In the domain of legislation, and even when punitive measures are mentioned in the legislation, the children recommend the adoption of more severe norms relative to the punishment of abuses against children...”

The children's report follows the same structure as the adult report, namely the States Parties reporting format. It does not contain any quotations, drawings or other visuals that indicate the children's level of involvement, but it contains one photo from the research process and five recommendations to improve the situation of the fulfilment of their rights. The children's report is substantiated by facts and figures in the main report.

Follow-up: UNICEF provided financial support for child participation when the Committee on the Rights of the Child examined the State report in Geneva. One 17-year old boy from the Child Parliament prepared a presentation in cooperation with the other children in Maputo and went to Geneva. He participated in the pre-session as an observer and in a special children's meeting, where his accompanying adults were supposed to translate. In the end, he did the entire presentation on his own, because one of the Committee members turned out to speak Portuguese.

After the pre-session in Geneva, Rede da Criança organised the launch of the civil society report. Representatives of the Ministry of Women and Social Action as well as the Ministry of Justice were present, and the Committee's recommendations were shared with the participants.

Currently, the Child Parliament is discussing the CSO report and the recommendations with the other parliament members in the provinces and suggesting the role that can be played by children to ensure that the government, other state bodies and society implement the recommendations from the CRC Committee.

The Children and the civil society organisations are also planning to monitor the implementation of the CRC and work out a plan of action on how to lobby the government via support to the Child Parliament, which is regarded as a counterpart by Save the Children, UNICEF and other organisations. In order to help the Child Parliament work effectively and democratically, Save the Children, amongst others, provides training on child rights, the presentation of ideas and non-discrimination to members.

Children will be involved in CRC reporting again, this time in a more child-participatory process. Almost unheard of a few years back, the focus on child participation in Mozambique has been steadily increasing, becoming something people now talk about. At the same time, the level of child participation in CSO activities has increased considerably since the first report, and the children generally are much more informed. Therefore, Save the Children expects that involving children on a larger scale will be significantly easier when the next CRC report is due.
Impact: Almost all of the recommendations in the CSO report were adapted by the Committee and included in the concluding observations. However, changes in Mozambique’s government have delayed the implementation of the recommendations, especially in terms of regulating laws to make them compliant with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Six young adults who were either former child reporters in Rede da Criança or Child Parliament members involved in the CRC reporting, and one of whom travelled to Geneva, see some level of change already: “Currently, there are more campaign initiatives on child trafficking. The birth registration process is becoming simplified. The children can now be registered even if their biological parents are not present. However, I am not sure whether this is resulting from what we pointed out in the report. What is true is that these improvements on child rights are taking place after the elaboration and dissemination of the report.”

They also feel that there is much more focus on child rights now compared to before because of the press coverage and the adults’ attitudes towards children’s participation have been changing. The young adults feel that their involvement in the reporting process has provided them with important personal skills. One girl explains: “I have learned to respect others more. I learnt to value what I do have, because during the process I became aware that there are other children who are in more need than me. I learnt that it is necessary to show solidarity. The process made me understand that my opinion can make a difference in the society. I felt that the right to opinions is very important, although it is not always respected.”

Challenges: Involving children is still a challenge in Mozambique. In rural areas, children’s opinions are not given much importance. This is in keeping with age-old traditions. People generally do not believe that children are capable, and they do not feel obliged to listen or respond to children’s concerns. This even goes for members of some civil society organisations, as child participation in civil society is still exceedingly weak in Mozambique.

To avoid repercussions and pave the way for children involved in child rights activities, Save the Children is working to sensitise adults. In early 2010, a full-time position was established to work with child participation to ensure that sensitisation efforts regarding adults in the communities, the partner organisations and even the country programme staffs take place. Ideally, Save the Children feels that children from all 11 Mozambique provinces should have been heard in the consultations prior to the report being written and that children from all over the country also ought to have been involved in the preparations of the presentation for Geneva, but time constraints prevented this.

Furthermore, the process was hampered by delays in the State reporting, which meant that initial research done by civil society organisations already in 2004, when the State report was due, had to be redone later to avoid being out-dated. Obstacles like these tend to make children lose patience, become disappointed and give up.

“I stood up to defend all children”

“I stood up to defend the problems of children from the rural and urban settings. Before, I used to raise concerns of children from urban settings only!!! I learned to be an active team player in defining priorities aimed at the well-being of all Mozambican children.”

18-year-old Mozambican male. Former member of Maputo City Child Parliament and former child reporter on the personal impact of his involvement in CRC reporting.

Written by: Adults, but majority is based on quotations from children.

Focus: Report from a hearing where children met with one of the members of the UN Committee. The organisers wanted to give as many children as possible in Norway the opportunity to speak directly to a Committee representative and thus to influence the monitoring of their own rights instead of having a few children travel to Geneva. The member made a visit as part of Norway’s reporting to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Participants: 59 children between 11-18 years of age. In Norway, the involved organisations chose to invite a member of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. The organisers wanted to give as many children as possible in Norway the opportunity to speak directly to a Committee representative and thus to influence the monitoring of their own rights instead of having a few children travel to Geneva.

In Norway, the involved organisations chose to invite a member of the UN Committee. The involved organisations wanted the Committee representative to meet children from different backgrounds living under different conditions, including children with unusual experiences, e.g. refugee children, children with disabilities, and children affected by violence and abuse who had had contact with the child welfare authorities. To ensure that all sorts of children were represented, the involved organisations chose to select the children instead of asking children to volunteer for the hearing.

Save the Children and the Norwegian Ombudsman for Children invited vulnerable children, e.g. children whose parents were in prison, refugee children and marginalised children. To protect the children, only children who were already in a support framework were selected, and the contact persons for these children were also involved and responsible for following up with the children.

Adults in leading positions from the involved organisations were invited in order to underline that the organisations also had the responsibility for following up with the children. To protect the children, only children who were already in a support framework were selected, and the contact persons for these children were also involved and responsible for following up with the children.

During the children’s hearing, the children remained in groups during the children’s pre-session. During the hearing itself, the children remained in groups established the day before, and the Committee representative visited each of the groups. This enabled all of the children to be heard. The adults from the organisations were also spread out in the children’s groups – as listeners. A procedure everybody appreciated.

Having all of the children be part of the entire hearing was deemed important so that they could learn from the other children’s experiences. At the end of the hearing, one representative from each group participated in a panel with the Committee representative, a Save the Children Norway representative and the Ombudsman for Children. The children shared the most important points, and the Committee member summed up what he intended to bring back to Geneva.
Impact: After the hearing the member of the UN Committee shared his knowledge with other members, and when the Norwegian authorities attended the proceedings in Geneva, the Committee member opened the examination by referring to his meeting with children in Norway. He in fact challenged the Norwegian authorities on a number of issues he had learned about from the children. The children’s inputs were also reflected in many of the Committee’s concluding observations.

However, the impact at ground level in Norway is so far limited, as only a year has passed. Civil society is addressing the need for a holistic plan on follow-up that includes civil society.

Challenges: Following the hearing and the process, Save the Children Norway has identified a number of experiences to learn from.

For example, it has been noted that inviting vulnerable children as individuals rather than as groups has made follow-up on them fairly demanding.

During the hearing, the groups found waiting for the representative to be a trying experience, and they resented having to recall the same messages over and over again every time a new adult joined their group. The conclusion is that while having smaller groups meet the representative works well, the groups not meeting with the representative should be kept busy doing something else – something fun, creative and interesting.

Three organisations cooperated well during the process of preparing and carrying out the hearing. However, follow-up activities were not clearly stated from the beginning, which means that little follow-up has taken place.

Working out a child-friendly version of the concluding observations is an attempt at follow-up, as a child-friendly version is paramount if children are to become involved in the future. Since the launch of the concluding observations in January 2010, the Norwegian Ombudsman for Children and Save the Children have been pushing for a child-friendly version. Until recently, the response from the Ministry of Children, Equality and Social Inclusion has been negative. As a result, Save the Children has initiated making a child-friendly version of the concluding observations.

Meeting the rights of children to be heard and to have their views taken seriously requires time and resources. This is why the children’s hearing was more than one exciting day; it was the start of a long process. It generated a great deal of knowledge and experiences that may enable an even better process in the future.

For real - for children

“This hearing is for real; it’s not some fake thing adults do.”

Participant Annas Haugrion, 16 to the newspaper Aftenposten

Written by: A child-friendly version of the recommendations is edited and illustrated by children, while the CSO report is written by adults.

Focus: General CRC.

Participants: In the initial phase, 20 children from the National Movement of Organised Working Children and Adolescents in Peru (MNNATSOP) were selected to do the research and writing of the supplementary report via a series of meetings in existing children’s spaces. The children were already familiar with child rights, since they receive constant support from adult organisations, and monitoring and advising for children’s rights is part of their activities and agenda.

15 children from MNNATSOP and the National Network of Child-led Organisations (REDNNA) participated in the second phase, which included advocacy on the concluding observations. Adults provided support and technical guidance during the entire process.

Research methods: The process of involving children in CRC reporting started already in 2005 when Save the Children was promoting that child rights coalitions should work to include children in supplementary reporting. The Child Rights National Coalition of Peru led a process to write the report, which included one consultation with children.

However, the children strongly felt that they should carry out a more comprehensive process, including consultations with several groups across the country representing children living in different contexts. The children also requested more time and child-friendly methodologies, including informative sessions on the CRC reporting process and child rights. This was not considered in the first place.

Subsequently, the children decided to initiate their own process reflecting their own views that led to a report to the CRC Committee.

Save the Children found that an entirely child-led approach has to be initiated further in advance. Thus, a compromise was made, and a limited number of issues of special concern were selected and discussed via a series of meetings in existing children’s spaces and networks. The network members and Save the Children facilitated the process and explained child rights, the reporting process, the role of the Committee and the importance of the concluding observations.

The input from the children’s meetings was included in the CSO report, and the children turned the recommendations from the CSO report into a child-friendly publication issued on its own.

Analysis, writing and contents: The children’s edition of the recommendations is colourful and consists of cartoons with children, including a girl in a wheelchair, indicating that this has been an all-inclusive process. Each recommendation has been reviewed and translated into child-friendly language. The titles are handwritten.

Apart from being documents for the Committee, the CSO report and the child-friendly recommendations are also meant to serve as information and food for thought for broader target groups. Therefore, the CSO report contains an introduction to the right to participation, the role of the UN, the application of the CRC in Peru, the National Plan of Action and the present situation, as well as previous recommendations and other relevant information. Boxes are inserted with useful facts, and all processes and lessons learned are carefully described. The publication has a foreword by the Vice President of the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Follow-up: Two children from MNNATSOP took part in the pre-sessions with the Committee on the Rights of the Child in Geneva, and a significant amount of follow-up was initiated in Peru. Amongst others, the child-friendly version of the recommendations became an important advocacy tool disseminated to children and adults in their communities, schools, children’s clubs and CSOs as well as to public authorities and the media. Some of the children even have composed theatre, songs and music about the reporting procedure. A series of meetings and events were held in Peru to disseminate the concluding observations in order to reach more children representing different organisations and duty bearers. Versions of the concluding observations were created for children both in Spanish and in Quechua. Public events were carried out at a local level where children presented the concluding observations using child-friendly materials and methodologies to show how the observations relate to the reality of children’s lives.

Children also got the opportunity to analyse and debate the concluding observations with representatives of local authorities. The children worked with these officials to develop solutions to some of the issues raised and to encourage them to make a commitment to implement the recommendations. This process took place during local elections, so the children seized the opportunity to place children’s rights on the political agenda. In several municipalities, mayoral candidates signed concrete commitments to follow-up on child rights violations of particular concern.

At a conference in the Congress of the Republic of Peru, children from different regions and cultures presented a legislative proposal to members of Congress asking them to make legislation obliging the Peruvian government to fully implement all the recommendations made by the Committee. The Vice-Chair of the Committee on the Rights of the Child also visited Peru. To make sure that the visit was successful, child-led organisations designed a programme for the visit that included meetings with civil servants and key decision makers in the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Women and Social Development, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and with the Children’s Ombudsman. Children also arranged meetings with CSOs and the media.

The Vice Chair highlighted the significance of her visit being prompted and organised by children. She also stressed...
that children had assumed responsibility for disseminating the concluding observations even though this was primarily the State’s responsibility.

Impact: The Committee’s concluding observations contained the majority of the children’s recommendations. Thanks to the follow-up activities and the Vice Chair’s visit, which received generous media coverage and subsequently reached even high level authorities and wide parts of the public, the impact is evident.

Child participation has become a priority on the political agenda. A National Advisory Council of Children has been created, and it has recently been announced that a Municipal Advisory Council of Children is to be established in Lima. The Ombudsman also meets and consults with children as a part of his working plan, and he has committed to following up on the concluding observations.

The children’s involvement in the CRC reporting process has also kick started an on-going process of reviewing laws concerning children to make them compliant with the CRC, amongst these a law against corporal punishment.

Challenges: A major challenge is how to continue the empowerment process of the children when they are busy studying and gradually growing up.

Some of the children involved in the CRC reporting are now adults, and although some of them still are involved as volunteers, it is a problem that knowledge is lost when new children take over. The same problem applies to the adults who facilitated the initial processes. When they, for example, leave their jobs, no one remains who possesses the same knowledge.

Save the Children and other CSOs in the network currently are trying to tie the process to the Child Rights National Coalitions, a network of CSOs working to promote children’s rights. These coalitions are usually the bodies writing the supplementary reports, so promoting the inclusion of child-led organisations into the coalitions is a way to ensure that child participation in CRC reporting eventually may become institutionalised.

This has happened in, for instance, El Salvador and Paraguay, where child-led organisations are members of the Child Rights National Coalitions and together with adult CSOs write and present the supplementary reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. In these countries, broad consultations with children take place, and child-friendly versions of the supplementary reports and the concluding observations are issued.

A Peruvian law promoting child organisation and participation in schools has made the dissemination of concluding observations easier, and schools will perhaps become directly involved in the next reporting process.

Peru – a long tradition of organised children

Peru has a long tradition of organised children, particularly working children. With a more than thirty year history, the National Movement of Organised Working Children and Adolescents in Peru (MNINATSOP) originated in the deep economic crisis of the 1970s when unemployment affected families across Peru.

Some organisations linked to churches began to support these families and their children, who gradually became more organised and still advocate for their rights. Other groups of children also began to emerge in Peru. These were particularly associated with youth centres and schools. Thanks to a new education law students are organised at schools, elect representatives and have a say in some aspects of school management. Currently, all these diverse types of child organisations are articulately under a national platform, the National Network of Child-led Organisations (REDNNA).

In most Latin American countries there are also Child Rights National Coalitions and networks of CSOs working to promote children’s rights.

Peru: a long tradition of organised children

Happiness and frustration

“There are many positive changes due to the mobilisation of children’s organisations in disseminating the recommendations of the CRC. Many local, regional and national level authorities have created spaces for children to participate for instance in budgeting, in the constitution of the Advisory Council and in other regions with the development of ‘pro-children’ plans. However, it is a long-term pedagogical task.”

“I feel a bit frustrated, because very few of the recommendations to the Peruvian government have been fulfilled especially in education, health, environment and other problems for children.”

Children involved in CRC reporting in Peru

Written by: A committee of adult writers drafted the supplementary civil society report incorporating children’s views and recommendations. This draft was then passed to the Board, which included child members, for validation.

Focus: The civil society supplementary report covers the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. However, the issues emerging as priorities for the children were: birth registration, child beggars, child domestic workers, early marriage, discrimination against children born out of wedlock, child participation, access to education for girls in rural areas, children in conflict with the law and harmful traditional practices.

Participants: In each of Senegal’s 11 regions, CONAFE’s 217 member organisations organised preliminary meetings to consult with a wide range of children from different backgrounds, including children with disabilities, children in school and children out of school. Child representatives from each region were then elected by their peers. The child representatives, 35 altogether, participated in the national workshop.

Research methods: In 2006, the child rights coalition CONAFE-Sénégal and its 217 member organisations prepared a civil society report for the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. An important part of this process was ensuring that children’s voices were heard. To achieve this, they developed a mechanism for child participation to ensure that the views of children from across the country were captured.

Initially, all member organisations organised preliminary children’s meetings in every region of Senegal. These children subsequently selected their own representatives. The 35 selected child representatives attended a five-day national workshop, and the children went through the State Party report point by point to discuss it and make recommendations. Much of the time, the children met without adults present as this enabled them to speak more freely.

The child representatives shared and analysed their experiences and the problems in their areas. They also looked into what projects and programmes were available. Most of the discussions were exempted with stories from the children’s own lives.

Analysis, writing and contents: The children’s input is part of a civil society supplementary report that uses the States Parties reporting format. There are no illustrations, but the children’s voices are an integrated part of the text, where they often are quoted – also in the recommendations section.

Follow-up: One girl was selected to help present the report to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in Geneva. After the sessions in Geneva, the delegation from CONAFE-Sénégal informed the Board, including the child Board members who had been involved in drafting the civil society report, about what happened in Geneva and presented all of the materials, including the concluding observations.

Children also participated in a number of regional four-day workshops on the reporting process with members of the CONAFE-Sénégal network, district level government bodies and community leaders. These regional workshops contributed to pushing the Ministry of Family Affairs to hold a national level workshop on the concluding observations.

Impact: CONAFE-Sénégal attributes many positive developments to children participating in the CRC reporting. Gradually, more children are becoming involved in the decision-making processes in programmes targeting children; girls are attending school despite being pregnant, and the authorities are considering a more realistic budget for expenditure on children.

Some of the issues raised in the supplementary report are also taken into account by organisations and civil society and include, e.g. the exploitation of child beggars, early marriages and early pregnancies, female genital mutilation and the abuse of children. Talking about these critical issues has become easier, and as the government and civil society become more aware, reality also changes.

According to a group of children who participated in the development and the validation of the supplementary report, their involvement in reporting has led to the adoption of a law against mendacity, education has become more inclusive, and rape has become illegal.

Challenges: The State Party report is very technical. Many of the children being consulted were illiterate and many did not speak French. As a result, they needed adults to translate key documents such as the State Party report, the CRC, and the concluding observations into Wolof and Pulaar.

At first, children and adults were not separated during meetings, but it became apparent that this was necessary to encourage free flowing discussion. Integrating the children’s views with those of adults is also exceedingly important. This was done by electing rapporteur children who felt confident about speaking publicly to present their groups’ findings to the adult group.

CONAFE-Sénégal also tried to ensure that children who attended school who got involved did so with minimum disruption to their education and with the active support of their school principals.
We discovered situations we could never have imagined.

“Thanks to the exercise of identifying the weaknesses and strengths of the State report, we have discovered situations we could never have imagined. The same applies to the exchange of experiences with friends from other parts of Senegal. It was touching. The sharing of experiences has been very important and continues to influence our actions.”

Chérif Youba Dieng, co-responsible for children’s participation in Dakar, Senegal


Written by: Adults.
Focus: General CRC.
Participants: 971 children.

In the selection process priority was given to children in marginalised communities that the Civil Society Forum for the Supplementary Report on the Convention on the Rights of the Child has access to. Only seven groups were involved due to time and resource constraints: the plantation sector; poor rural areas; disabled children; children formerly associated with armed forces; internally displaced children; poor urban children; and children in correctional institutions.

The children come from all nine provinces, speak one of the national languages, Tamil and Sinhala, represent all three major ethnic groups (Sinhalese, Tamil, Muslim) and the four main religions (Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, Islam).

Research methods: The Forum decided to consult children and make their voices heard without filtering them through adult language and interpretations. The Forum developed a strategic plan for the consultations on how to incorporate children’s ideas without them losing their authenticity.

It is the very first time Sri Lankan children have given their input to a supplementary report.

In order to support the children giving input, an open invitation was sent to CSOs in the Forum to nominate facilitators with relevant experience in child participation. Final selections were made on the basis of experience in applying child participation in work; working with the specific groups of children; knowledge of languages and contexts of communities; willingness to travel; and availability.

All facilitators participated in a two-day workshop with specific focus on child participation principles and methodologies for consulting marginalised children, and all children and their guardians were informed prior to the consultations, and their consent was sought.

Focus group discussions and individual interviews took place from December 2008 to March 2009 in the children’s own environment to make them feel safe and at ease. Ahead of each session the purpose was always explained. The children also were given a brief introduction to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the reporting process and the children’s right to participation in it. The children’s consent was reconfirmed after the introduction.

Analysis, writing and contents: The report was written by the civil society organisations engaged in the entire process and directly involved in consulting with the children. This enriched the quality of the report, while also enabling the organisations to critically reflect on their own work and capture new and workable ideas and thereby contribute meaningfully to the cause of child rights.

The opportunity to recheck and refine information was provided to the children at the end of every consultation, and the annex is written in the children’s own words. The children’s reports were initially written in local languages and then translated into English.
The annex is structured according to sector. Each sector is equipped with a brief introduction stating how many children were involved, religion and ethnicity, socio-economic background, disabilities, where the consultation took place and specifics about the areas covered.

Direct quotations from the children and practical, measurable recommendations such as put up a hospital, reconstruct roads, provide drinking water and electricity etc. make up the main part of the annex.

Follow-up: Although there is a provision for children to participate in the pre-session in Geneva, only adults, and only one Sri Lankan from Save the Children went. This was the case in order to protect the children against potential repercussions based on misunderstandings from those in authority. The report deals with sensitive issues, e.g. children formerly associated with armed forces and the report came out at the end of a lengthy war where the political situation was exceedingly tense.

In the wake of the reporting, Save the Children, with the support of Fonè, Plan Sri Lanka and World Vision Sri Lanka, has supported the establishment of an island-wide advocacy network of civil society organisations working with children. It is known as the Child Rights Advocacy Network, CRAN. The network has district forums in 22 out of 25 districts. Network members have trained in child rights, child participation and advocacy and are now preparing their district advocacy strategies.

Still growing, the Child Rights Advocacy Network is nearing the completion of a registration process that will give it the legitimacy to work. At the moment of writing, there are 160 paying members, a series of workshops on different aspects of child rights is on-going and the setting up of CRAN district offices is in progress. Ultimately, CRAN is going to work independently of Save the Children and other international organisations.

Member organisations in different districts focus on different topics depending on the specific problems in their area, e.g. child sexual abuse, underage marriages, children with special needs, school drop-outs, child labour, alcoholism and drug abuse among children and parents, children of migrant mothers, street children, nutrition, comprehensive sexuality education in schools and child participation.

The network will share the outcome of the pre-session and the concluding observations with the children in their area to use these in the coming five years of advocacy. When the network is full-fledged, it will help create a children’s network of at least 200-300 child clubs covering up to 30,000 children the network will support in advocating child rights. Most of the children are already involved in rights-based activities, and many of them have already identified specific issues and addressed them.

Not all the children are expected to be active at network level, but the clubs will select and elect their own representatives to participate in network meetings.

Close cooperation between the adult and the child-led network will ensure sustainability when the children turn 18 years of age and leave the children’s network.

Currently, Save the Children is conducting a series of relevant trainings for journalists and children in children’s clubs with the aim of helping the children form their network. Technical support was received from Save the Children Norway, and the knowledge gained was shared with 160 children’s clubs or 6,000 children altogether.

Initial funding for both networks stems from the EU.

Impact: When the Committee on the Rights of the Child sent its concluding observations to the Sri Lanka State Party, 58 out of 102 observations were similar to the recommendations in the CSO report.

Although considerable historical changes in Sri Lanka during and after the reporting period make it difficult to ascertain whether the Committee’s concluding observations are actually being implemented, some level of impact of the reporting has already been observed.

In the annex, many children in correctional institutions complain about being kept there excessively beyond the timeframes laid down in national legislation. Following the supplementary reporting and the concluding observations, the Ministry of Justice has carried out training sessions on relevant legislation for magistrates and other duty bearers.

A special children’s court has also been created to expedite hearings and cases against children. This court has restrooms for the children, a playroom, and the actual courtroom is more child-friendly than a formal court. Children also have their own entrance so that they do not have to risk meeting their perpetrators on the door step.

However, the most significant impact has yet to be seen. Potentially, the CRC reporting process may become the catalyst for peace building, because children from all parts of society and all ethnic groups are going to cooperate in the new, island-wide network for children initiated by the children’s involvement in the CRC reporting.

Challenges: The Forum experienced many challenges in
gathering reliable information from government agencies, civil society and individuals. Many different government departments were dealing with the same subject with overlapping mandates, and the State Party report covers ten years with vast political and historical changes affecting the child rights situation, not least the end of an almost three-decade-long civil war.

Top level positions in relevant government bodies have also seen many changes, causing delays in the implementation and the subsequent ability to monitor the outcome.

Another challenge came from within the Forum. Mainly based in the capital of Colombo with projects all over the country, organisations found it difficult to dedicate staff members entirely to this assignment. Travelling is time consuming, and some areas such as camps for internally displaced persons and recently resettled villages had curfew times, which did not allow the facilitators much time with the children.

Getting access to children who are not members of a child club, supported by an organisation or part of an institution also has proven difficult. Some groups of children had to be left out, e.g. child monks in monasteries and children from the indigenous community, as the team could not gain access.

Time, a shortage of resources and lack of prior experience also prevented the full participation of children, which is why the report ultimately comprised “just children’s voices.” However, the Committee in Geneva greatly appreciated the authentic presentation of the children’s voices.

No names of organisations or contributors are mentioned anywhere in the report, because the involved organisations did not feel confident about how the authorities would react. Initially, the contributing organisations also did not want to make the report public, but following the process of presenting the report to the Committee, civil society organisations made the report readily available and shared it with government officials.

As it is, there have been no repercussions. This is probably due to the open, honest approach Save the Children, the Forum and CRAN apply to maintaining that their work is all about Sri Lankan children and improving their situation. In Geneva, the organisations presented themselves as being there to learn and help, not to criticise. The organisations also continuously work to identify and involve positively minded people in the relevant ministries who are willingly carrying the process forward.
Children are the best to talk about their problems

“We believe that it is important that children are involved in reporting on child rights, because children are the best to talk about their problems. The adults sometimes may not understand what the children intend to say. If the children are involved, there is no chance to distort the opinion of the children. Also, children learn about the reporting process and get a space to raise their voice nationally and internationally. The CRC supplementary reporting process is a very good way to claim the rights of the children and give the children’s situation with the adults.”

Ten Bangladesh children involved in CRC reporting at Factbank. Report writers and graphic designers

Ten steps to meaningful children’s participation in CRC reporting

This little guide is meant to be simple, inspiring and motivating rather than detailed and technical. As the examples in it’s all about children prove, there is not one correct way, but many different paths to child-informed CRC reporting. Therefore, the ten steps mainly include considerations you will have to take into account no matter what approach the children and you chose to make the process meaningful and ethical.

The experiences gathered in it’s all about children and the ten steps will help you and the children in making the right choice under the present circumstances in your organisation, your country and context.

Maybe the ten steps will even inspire you to work out ways that no one has even thought of yet. The only certainty is that with some general considerations, a few key words and some overall concepts in mind, child-informed and child-led CRC reporting is an educative and fun experience resulting in empowered children claiming their rights and holding their governments responsible in the future – leading to better governance for the benefit of all children.

Ten steps to meaningful children’s participation in CRC reporting

1. It’s all about children

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Save the Children practice standards

When planning and supporting children and young people’s participation in advocacy, the seven basic Save the Children practice standards for participation should be considered:

- An ethical approach: transparency, honesty and accountability. Adult organisations and workers are committed to ethical participatory practice and to the primacy of children’s best interests.
- Children’s participation is relevant and voluntary: Children participate in processes and address issues that affect them – either directly or indirectly – and have the choice as to whether to participate or not.
- A child-friendly, enabling environment. Children experience a safe, welcoming and encouraging environment for their participation.
- Equality of opportunity: Child participation challenges and does not reinforce existing patterns of discrimination and exclusion. It encourages those groups of children who typically suffer discrimination and who are often excluded from participatory processes.
- Staffs are effective and confident. Adult staffs and managers involved in supporting and facilitating children’s participation are trained and supported to do their jobs to a high standard.
- Participation promotes the safety and protection of children. Child protection policies and procedures form an essential part of participatory work with children.
- Ensuring follow-up and evaluation. Respect for children’s involvement is indicated by a commitment to provide feedback and/or follow-up and to evaluate the quality and impact of children’s participation.

Do …

- Get a commitment by everyone involved – children and adults – to respect each others’ views and to work together for a positive outcome.
- Recognise the stage of development and maturity of the children involved and use of methods and approaches that respect and build upon that recognition.
- Be sensitive and responsive to the context in which children live.
- Be able to provide meeting places and facilitate activities and events aimed at encouraging children’s involvement.
- Know when and how to intervene to support the process while at the same time encouraging children’s growth and development.
- Allow the necessary time for children to work together and come up with their own opinions.
- Advise children of the reasons for participation and the possible consequences of different alternatives, thereby offering them the possibility not to participate, which is as important as the right to take part.
- Ensure access to relevant information prepared in a child-friendly way.
- Be prepared to listen to children’s priorities.
- Be clear about what you are trying to achieve.
- Be clear about the boundaries of the proposed initiative.
- The necessary research.
- Be willing to consult with children on methods for involving them.
- Remember that children are not a homogenous group.
- Be prepared to make the necessary time and resources available.
- Remember the importance of working with adults as well as children.
- Be prepared to be challenged.

Facilitating children in their rightful participation in CRC reporting is highly rewarding, but also time consuming and requires funding and specialised adult facilitation. The process has to make sense, be ethical and remain in keeping with practice standards. So be realistic. Explore if the children have the time required and if your organisation and network are capable of providing the facilitating support and resources needed. Adjust your expectations accordingly. Take special constraints into consideration. How will you cover remote areas? Do you need permissions? Are there curfews in some areas? How will you get access to children who are not members of a child club, involved in an organisation or who are out-of-school? Are there any risks involved?

Networking with other organisations is a good way to reach a greater number of children from a wider range of backgrounds. This will also enable you to avoid duplication and make better use of resources.

Reports from children are expected to be submitted six months before the State Party examination takes place. Since six months is insufficient to carry out meaningful child participation you should discuss the opportunities and embark on the process well ahead of this deadline. True child-informed and child-led processes take more time than you can imagine.

To lower their expectations and prevent frustration and disappointment, let the children know from the very beginning that their recommendations will not be implemented overnight by explaining the political process in your country and the role of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. But also underline why it is important for children to get involved. You may use examples of what other children have achieved from it’s all about children.

Step one: Are we walking down that road?

Step two: Who and how?

If the idea of working out a supplementary child-led CRC report does not emerge from the children themselves, involving a core group of children at this stage is one way to ensure that the process will be as child-led as possible from the beginning.

Some of the children ought to have direct experience with the topic, if you are going to focus on specific issues. If you are looking, for example, into the rights of children with disabilities, these children should be part of the process and be heard already now.

In order to make the reporting representative you should consider how to reach as many children as possible with the resources and manpower available. You will probably find it necessary to involve relevant organisations, schools and institutions to reach these children.

You may also publish requests for participants in newspapers and magazines, on popular online sites and the radio, as well as in orphanages, social care centres, boarding schools, schools for children with disabilities etc., depending on your focus, resources and your local context.

Your invitation letter to organisations and institutions should contain an introduction to you and your organisation, to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and the reporting process, the activities undertaken in connection to the reporting, the timeframe, a consent form and a contact for further questions and feedback. It is a good idea to issue two versions: One for children and one for adults.

Develop a consent form to be filled in and signed by the child and its guardians ahead of interviews. It should contain a brief description of the purpose, time requirements, risks, benefits, impact, the right to say no, confidentiality and of course name, age and address of the child and his or her parents.

Always make sure that there is time and space for questions.
Child rights from a child’s perspective

A group of children related to different development organisations learned from their adult facilitators that the Bangladesh government signed the United Nations’ Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1990. This endorsement means that the government has to send a report depicting the status of child rights in Bangladesh to the Child Rights Committee every five years. The children also found out that the development organisations working for children’s rights are allowed to send their own supplementary report to the Committee. The children decided to portray the child rights situation from a child’s perspective.

They collected viewpoints on education, health and protection from more than 12,000 children using consultations, questionnaires and news reports. While adults tend to use words only, the children’s report contained photos, tables with happy and sad smileys, arrows pointing up and down depending on whether a situation had improved or worsened, and drawings.

Excerpt from:

From child labour to children in charge: A handbook on child-led organisation and advocacy on child labour by Lotte Ladegaard/Save the Children Sweden-Denmark in Bangladesh.


- Written by: Children.
- Focus: Education, health, and protection.
- Participants: The child-led organisations Ichchey Media Group, Child Brigade, Vorer Alo and National Children Task Force Bangladesh invited members of other children’s organisations to participate. Two children were selected from each organisation according to age, area, gender and socio-economic background. In all, 87 children from different areas were selected to help carry out research in all 64 districts. Input was provided by 12,225 children.
- Research methods: 138 consultations, questionnaires and news reports.
- Children from 31 schools and 5,093 working children, ethnic children, children living in shelter homes, in the street or in otherwise difficult situations were also included.
- Also information from publications and documentary films was included.
- Analysis, writing and illustrations were designed by children. Adults facilitated the process by assisting in making the decision to prepare the report in the first place, conducting a workshop for other adults on how to facilitate the process; and arranging a workshop for all child representatives. During this workshop, the children found out how to collect the information, and they prepared a format. The format focuses on the present situation, the reason behind it, the result, and the dreams of children. The children also created different groups: consultation teams; a secondary information collection team; a questionnaire analysing team; and a report-writing team. Adults provided support, worked together with organisations, running consultations, sending questionnaires, compiling data and sending the report to the Committee. This work was based on drawings and photos produced by the children, because most of the children were illiterate. A flip chart was used for the narrative parts. Collages of text and illustrations sum up the findings. Tables with arrows pointing up and down and happy and sad smileys show whether a situation had improved or worsened. All of the texts carefully spell out how many children encountered the same problems so that it is easy for the reader to compare the gravity of each issue. When the children were responding about their dreams, they also suggested who could make the dreams come true: different institutions, governmental and public organisations, NGOs, parents and the children themselves. The report includes a list of participating organisations, secondary sources and footnotes.

- Follow-up: One boy went to Geneva to participate in the pre-session. The children organised a report launching ceremony at national level, participated in a meeting with a rapporteur and in other follow-up meetings and press conferences. Above all, they created a platform called “Child Protection Movement” with all the children and adolescents involved in preparation of the report. Ichchey Media Group also monitors newspapers and published a violence report that was shared with the media and policy makers. The children provided their comments to the government’s child policy.

- Impact: According to ten of the children involved in the reporting process, awareness has been raised in local communities. Due to this, more children living in slums go to school now, and community people supply food for flood affected children. Discrimination between boys and girls is diminishing. Physical punishment in schools has been reduced as the government has introduced a law against it, and the government is providing free books to most schools. The Election Commission has issued a Code of Conduct for political parties stating that children should not be involved in meetings and processions.
Use drama, music, video, photos, painting, drawing, games and the Internet to let the children rank by importance the topics to cover in the report, develop team spirit and explore rights issues in the research, writing and designing process. Almost all children, also ones who are illiterate and the youngest children, respond well to these or some of these ways of expression. Make sure that all the children feel valued, included and know what is expected of them when.

Step three:
Who will be in charge of what?

Consider how you will organise and divide the responsibility for the research, the analysis of the data collected, the writing and the design of the report. There are many options:

- A small steering committee in charge of all processes.
- Different committees focusing on different topics.
- Different committees focusing on different parts of the process.
- Many small sub-groups working in their own areas all over the country.
- A combination of options.

When selecting how to do everything, take into consideration the children’s maturity, current capacities, interest in participation, any disabilities, gender issues, education, role in the family and community, cultural beliefs, the context, local dialects and minority languages.

Make sure that all the children feel valued, included and know what is expected of them when.

Art, media and games are fun and inclusive

Use drama, music, video, photos, painting, drawing, games and the Internet to let the children rank by importance the topics to cover in the report, develop team spirit and explore rights issues in the research, writing and designing process. Almost all children, also ones who are illiterate and the youngest children, respond well to these or some of these ways of expression. Find plenty of inspiration for games, exercises and child-friendly tools in From child labour to children in charge. A handbook on child-led organisation and advocacy on child labour: http://www.redbarnet.dk/Default.aspx?ID=5727&M=Shop&PID=15524&ProductID=1005 and Kits of Tools for participatory research and evaluation with children, young people and adults: http://www.redbarna.no/default.aspx?ID=19028.

Although the content of the handbook is developed for and by child labourers, many of the tools can easily be adapted to other groups of children and different purposes.

Step four:
Are you all capable?

You need to develop a good team spirit and the right capacity if the process is going to be meaningful.

Check expectations, levels of awareness and capacity through games, exercises, examples and discussions and tailor make your capacity building sessions. Remember to include a variety of activities as different children and different age groups have different ways of learning. Cut down on presentations and scale up the active learning involving children.

Develop child-friendly information on child rights and the reporting process, relevant documents such as the concluding observations and laws affecting children’s rights in your country. The children will probably also need to learn how to do research, analysis and reporting. Remember that adult facilitators may need training too.

Step five:
Gathering information

The children will probably need some support when they are to select and develop their child-friendly research tools. These may be interviews and activity groups, questionnaires for others, surveys, round-table discussions, seminars, work groups, short stories, drawings, role plays, photos, digital storytelling and many, many others and probably a combination of several.

One of the most important things you must do when you are asking children to share their views and experiences with you is to ask their permission to use the information they give you. You should always explain why you are doing the research, and tell children that they do not have to answer any questions that make them feel uncomfortable. If you are asking children questions through interviews, you will need to think of a way to record what they say – perhaps by taking notes, or by tape recording the interview. Ask for the children’s permission first.

You must also tell them what you plan to do with the information, and how it will be used. Make sure you give them feedback and keep in touch with them about the reporting process and the Committee’s final recommendations.

If you have decided to include a large group of respondents and carry out an actual survey, a questionnaire may be of good help. Depending on the target group, a teacher or representatives from civil society may be tasked with helping respondents fill in the questionnaire. Or you, children from the core group and sub-groups will have to carry out consultations where the respondents fill in the questionnaire. In some countries, large groups of children are illiterate. The children you target may be very young, or your core group and respondents may consist of child labourers. In that case you should consider using alternative means like questionnaires based on drawings, photos and happy and sad smileys.
When you carry out consultations, meetings, discussions, interviews and other direct research activities, it is a good idea to meet the respondents in their own environment to make them feel safe and at ease. Build relationships with guardians, community leaders and other organisations to ensure informed consent, support, cooperation and dissemination of information to a wider circle of people ahead of the consultations and meetings with the children. In many societies, child participation is still frowned upon, and without preparations the children may experience repercussions.

Always maintain confidentiality, but make sure the children understand and accept that some exceptions may occur, and respect a "no.

Document in the children’s own words and provide opportunities for the children to recheck and refine information at the end of every consultation.

One challenge is to find ways for younger children to participate. Using dramas, plays, collages and drawings may be helpful.

An important part of doing research on children’s rights is making recommendations about how things can be improved. Read through your findings and decide what needs to be done to improve the situation.

Ideally, you also need facts and figures to substantiate the findings; especially if the report is independent of CSO reports. These facts and figures may be found in country-, area- and theme-specific studies, via UN organisations, on www.crin.org, SCI resource center for child rights governance: http://resourcecentre.savethechildren.se/ and other websites.

### Questionnaire and interview tips

- Avoid yes and no questions.
- Avoid multiple response questions.
- Avoid unclear questions. Be specific.
- Make questions without assumptions.
- Do not ask too many questions. Concentrate on the things you really need to know.

### Basic checklist

**Did you ...**

- Ensure equality: gender, age, ethnicity, religion, disabilities, socio-economic background etc.?
- Solve language and understanding problems?
- Help pave the way in the local communities?
- Participate in important meetings with the children when requested?
- Carry out realistic planning?
- Continue teambuilding and encourage group work?
- Remember that information gathering takes lots of time, that children also have other obligations – work, household chores, and exams – and that the children, their parents, teachers, employers and other relevant persons will have to give their permission?

**Yes**

**No**

- Made sure that consultation participants were selected as per the diversity criteria, if the report is independent of CSO reports?
- Documented consent?
- Planned how to ensure informed consent?
- Made sure that children understood what they were signing?
- Made sure that the children understood the purpose of the study and what they were expected to do?
- Made sure that the children understood that participation was voluntary and that they could withdraw at any time?
- Made sure that the children understood the importance of telling the truth?
- Made sure that the children understood that they could refuse to answer questions?
- Made sure that the children understood what would happen to the information gathered?
- Made sure that the children understood that any information gathered would be kept confidential and would be shared only with the children and with those who had consent to hear what the children had to say?
- Made sure that the children understood that they could withdraw from the study at any time?
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- Made sure that the children understood that they could withdraw from the study at any time?
How do you want to organise your report? When governments and CSOs submit reports to the Committee, they are asked to present them in eight chapters reflecting the different clusters of rights in the CRC, but there are no rules about what children should include in their reports, or how the reports should look. A written report is practical as it can easily be translated into other languages, although videos and pictures may also be used.

It is important to remember who you are writing for:

The Committee on the Rights of the Child is a group of 18 adult experts on children’s rights.

Keep it short and simple: No more than 30 pages in English, French or Spanish.

Do you want to include pictures, drawings and quotes from children in your report? These can help get your message across and make your report more interesting. However, select your quotes and illustrations carefully. Are they powerful and will they back up your argument? Do they represent lots of children or just some?

Include children’s recommendations in your report to show the Committee what children think needs to be done to improve the children’s rights in your country.

Try reading the report from an outsider’s point of view, or let someone else read it. Do you think it clearly explains the children’s problems in your country?

Remember to include basic information:

- Number of children involved directly and indirectly.
- Their gender, age group, ethnicity, disabilities, socio-economic background.
- How the children were selected.
- The capacity building process.
- The roles of children and adults.
- Summary of procedures used to decide on the contents, the collection of data, the analysis and the writing and design of the report.
- Timeframes and year for the final report.
- Challenges encountered on the way. These are especially good to learn from.
- If you include adult facilitators’ names in the colophon, you should also include the names of the core group of children.

Step six:
Understanding the data?

How will you analyse the data you have collected?

If you have gathered hundreds, maybe even thousands of questionnaires, you probably will need to use some kind of data management system, spreadsheets and tabulation. There are also examples of children who have gone through all questionnaires and counted the responses, dividing them into their own handwritten categories in order to draw out common and contradictory themes, key findings and conclusions. If you and the children have primarily collected data via interviews and focus groups, your amount of data may be more manageable. In this situation you may choose just to use children’s quotations, cases and recommendations directly without applying an analysis.

However, if this is your solution, substantiation via facts and figures from other written sources will strengthen your findings considerably. Otherwise, the Committee on the Rights of the Child will not know if a quote, case and recommendation are a one-off affair or represent a general problem. Including the children’s report as an annex to your supplementary CSO report is one way of ensuring substantiation if the children do not have the capacity, time and resources to do so.

The information presented should be based on what is important to the children and can lead to advocacy efforts at the local, national and international levels.

Depending on the capacities of the children involved, they may not be able to physically write the report. Yet, they may provide input, opinions, structure and formats. Drawings and photos may be used for children who are young, illiterate or unhappy about writing. If adults write the report, using quotations from children in the report adds value, validity and ownership. Preferably, the report should include specific examples of legislation, policies, facts and figures to support the points being made, and identify what articles are being discussed and the violations of these.

If some parts of the report do not derive from the opinions of children, it should be clearly stated which ones.

Step seven:
Compiling the report

The information presented should be based on what is important to the children and can lead to advocacy efforts at the local, national and international levels.

Depending on the capacities of the children involved, they may not be able to physically write the report. Yet, they may provide input, opinions, structure and formats. Drawings and photos may be used for children who are young, illiterate or unhappy about writing. If adults write the report, using quotations from children in the report adds value, validity and ownership. Preferably, the report should include specific examples of legislation, policies, facts and figures to support the points being made, and identify what articles are being discussed and the violations of these.

If some parts of the report do not derive from the opinions of children, it should be clearly stated which ones.
Step eight: Going to Geneva?

Meeting with the Committee on the Rights of the Child in Geneva is an opportunity for children to claim their place at the heart of the CRC reporting process. Most children who meet with the Committee participate in a children's meeting in Geneva during the Committee's pre-session. However, children may also attend the pre-session working group as observers or as participants. Some also participate in the States Parties examination.

The pre-session is a confidential three-hour meeting in which UN agencies, CSOs and children who have submitted supplementary reports and the Committee on the Rights of the Child develop a strategy to present the findings to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. These meetings are not yet a formal part of the reporting process and must be worked into the Committee's pre-session schedule in advance.

The children’s meeting usually lasts for an hour and takes place either just before or just after the pre-session working group. The Chair of the Committee is usually present, along with the Committee member acting as the country rapporteur for the State Party examination. Other Committee members will usually attend. The meeting is less formal than the pre-session working group meeting.

The plenary session is the main meeting between the government and the Committee, where the State representatives and Committee members take the floor. UN bodies and agencies are represented. Journalists, CSOs, children and other interested parties are free to attend as observers. Two country rapporteurs provide a brief overview of the state of child rights in the concerned country, and the Committee members ask questions while the State delegation responds. The concluding observations are the outcome of the whole process and include suggestions and recommendations expected to be made widely available in the country in question.

Proud and privileged

“I am feeling proud and privileged due to the fact that I represented Mozambican children in Geneva and due to the presentation of the report on the implementation of child rights in Mozambique. I felt that I am useful for the country and that our right to voice our opinions was respected.”

18-year-old male. Former member of Maputo City Child Parliament, former child reporter and participant in the pre-session.

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Prepare the trip to Geneva well

- Remember that passports and visas have to be issued well in advance.
- During the pre-session there is translation into English, French and Spanish.
- During the pre-session Russian, Arabic and Chinese translators can be provided if asked in advance.
- Translation is not available for the children’s meeting. Interpreters must be provided by CSOs.
- There are no facilities for PowerPoint presentations or video in the Committee’s meeting room.
- Make sure that the children are aware of who they represent and what their mandate is.
- Brief the children about what to expect in Geneva in terms of lifestyle, culture, history, transport, accommodation, weather etc.
- Arrive early and have fun too. Preferably with other child participants from other countries.

It’s all about children
First of all, you have to share the experiences and outcome of the trip and the meetings in Geneva with the children who did not participate.

Then, you should explore how the children would like to use their immense knowledge, their own report and the concluding observations from the Committee in the future.

Some children have used the report as a point of departure for developing their own indicators and CRC monitoring system. Others have embarked on advocacy to make their government implement the CRC in keeping with the concluding observations. Organisations sometimes continue the process with new projects and new initiatives leading to the development of nationwide child rights civil society networks and children's platforms advocating child rights and the preparation of future CRC reports.

Many CSOs decide to invite the country rapporteur. A rapporteur visit is an extremely useful tool that allows larger numbers of children, and children from more diverse backgrounds to participate, and it gives the Committee the opportunity to see the settings in which the children live. It is especially useful where CSOs do not have the funding to bring a delegation to Geneva but wish to enable children to meet directly with Committee members.

Make sure that all the processes are properly documented, stored, shared and evaluated. Unfortunately, this is not always the case, and important knowledge is lost for the future. Children grow up, adults change jobs, and processes start all over again only to battle the same challenges which could have been avoided if everything had been documented, stored and shared via databases and online for the benefit of everyone and act as advocacy per se.

Evaluations also tend to be forgotten. However, these are important learning tools and a way for all of the people involved to share their frustrations, pride, happiness and new ideas about the way forward, to avoid repeating mistakes and to refine methods already developed. Also take steps to prepare children who turn 18 for continued involvement. There are many examples of frustrated adolescents who, just because they turn 18, are rejected from projects and processes they initiated. By involving them as volunteers and facilitators, you can draw on their skills and knowledge, build bridges between children and adults and make sure that the young adults do not feel forgotten and rejected. Ensuring institutionalisation is important. Initiatives often die out when pioneers leave the organisation.

Lots of good advice from colleagues around the world

- You need lots of time, patience and more resources than you expect: funds for travelling and accommodation, materials, venues, resource persons, documentation and copying, recreational activities, follow-up activities and other expenses have to be covered.
- Let the children develop their own ideas, respect what they come up with and learn from them.
- You need excellent adult facilitators with good listening skills, the right tools and good knowledge about the current situation in the country.
- Include children in developing the research methods and questions, because they know their country and their peers.
- By getting to know the reporting process and translating it into child-friendly language well before involving the children, adult facilitators may avoid many pitfalls.
- Take the context into careful consideration. At best, you lose time and resources. At worst, you put the children at risk.
- Consider from the very beginning how to institutionalise children's participation in CRC reporting. One way could be to advocate that awareness of the reporting process should be included in the national school curriculum.
- Involve religious groups. They are very influential in many countries.
- Collect views from children in remote rural areas with problems differing from urban areas.
- Work with adults to create an enabling environment where children do not experience repercussions from adults adverse to children's participation.
- Media are important partners. Involving media advisors may help increase coverage.
- Inviting a Committee member to your own country works well. While an organisation rarely can afford to send more than one or two children to Geneva, a member of the Committee may meet larger groups of children in the children's own country.
- Cooperation in networks and coalitions is a good idea. However, make sure that follow-up activities are outlined from the very beginning, including how the organisations involved intend to use the experiences from the process in their future work and how the concluding observations are to be followed-up.
- Apply your Child Protection Policy.

To be continued

“We are very happy to be part of the alternative report prepared by the children. We hope whatever is mentioned in the report will be worked on in future. It will bring benefit for children. We feel that the process was good and it should be continued. More children should be involved in the process: especially the indigenous children’s problems need more focus.”

Ten Bangladeshi children who were involved in CRC reporting as facilitators, researchers, analysts, report writers and graphic designers.
Would you like to read more?

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It’s all about children could not have been possible without the support, input and critical review of children and adults in Korea, Moldova, Mozambique, Norway, Peru, Senegal and Sri Lanka. Each of you generously provided time, honest reflections and encouraging enthusiasm about child participation in CRC reporting. Many other representatives of Save the Children and partner organisations in Bangladesh, Nepal, South East Europe and elsewhere also shared reporting, ideas and provided access to further information. The process of putting “It’s all about children” together has been extremely rewarding and easy going thanks to all of you.

For more information please contact:

Child Rights Governance Global Initiative
Save the Children
Rosenørns Alle 12
1634 Copenhagen V, Denmark
Tel: +45 35 36 55 55
E-mail: ls@redbarnet.dk
Web: www.savethechildren.net

Only CRC reporting is included
Although many children have also been included in supplementary reporting on the optional protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, these reports are not included because they go beyond the scope of this booklet.
"I think that children’s involvement in the reporting on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is important, because first of all the report is about children. They should participate in its development, because they are the ones who are able to say what have to change in their social lives regarding their rights. Developing a report on child rights without participation of children would not make sense."

18-year-old Mozambican male and former child reporter for the child produced magazine “A Voz da Criança”