



Handbook for Adults Monitoring and Engaging in a Country Session of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child

Child Rights Connect

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About Child Rights Connect

Child Rights Connect is an international network of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that advocates for children's enjoyment of their rights and empowers children's rights defenders, including children, NGOs, national human rights institutions (NHRIs) and Ombudspersons, to engage effectively with the Committee on the Rights of the Child (the Committee).

Since our creation more than 30 years ago, we have assisted and supported children's rights defenders from all countries of the world to use the Committee's work to make change happen on the ground for children. Our longstanding experience and unique partnership with the Committee and its Secretariat, which is part of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), has made us their focal point for the participation of children's rights defenders in the Committee's work.

How to use this Handbook

This Handbook has been developed by Child Rights Connect to assist those monitoring and engaging in a session of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

It contains practical information to be well prepared for the session and how action can be taken.

This Handbook complements the information you can find on our [mini site on the Committee's reporting cycle](#) and our **Handbook for Children Monitoring and Engaging in a Session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child**.

Also note that we have a **Handbook for Adults Participating in the Pre-Session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child** and a **Handbook for Children Participating in the Pre-Session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child**.

Tell us what you think about this Handbook

We would very much appreciate any comment you might have on this Handbook. We would particularly like to know how you have used it, what you found most helpful and what you feel is missing so that we can improve it for others.

Please send your comments to: crcreporting@childrightsconnect.org



CONTACT US!

If you have any question or need additional guidance to ensure child participation in the Committee's reporting cycle, please contact us:

- ✓ via email at: crcreporting@childrightsconnect.org
- ✓ by phone: landline: +41 22 552 41 30

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Introduction: Important keywords

➤ Session

A three-week meeting period that takes place in Geneva, Switzerland. During the session, the Committee meets with government representatives from the countries up for review to discuss how each State is fulfilling its children's rights obligations.

➤ Country session

A public meeting between the Committee and the State representatives of the country up for review, during which they have an "interactive dialogue" about the situation of children's rights in the country.

➤ Pre-session

A one-week meeting period that takes place in Geneva, Switzerland. During the pre-session, the Committee meets with the children's rights defenders, including children, they have decided to invite, based on the alternative reports they have received, to prepare for the country session with State representatives.

I. What is a Country Session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child?

During the session weeks, the Committee meets with government representatives from the countries up for review to discuss the extent to which and how each State is fulfilling its children's rights obligations.

The Committee bases the interactive dialogue with the government representatives on many things, including: the State report, the government's written replies to the Committee's list of issues, the civil society's submissions, information shared during the pre-session and children's meetings, and other relevant documentation received or consulted by the Committee.

A country session is a public meeting: anyone, including representatives of NGOs, UN agencies, National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), students, journalists, and children, can attend the meeting as an observer. But no one other than the State representatives or the Committee can speak during the meeting. The meeting can be watched online live or after the meeting.

Tips! To have a better idea of what a country session looks like, you can look at the current archives of other sessions on the [UN Web TV](#).

I. When and where does the session of my country take place?

The country session is normally scheduled 6 months after the Committee's pre-session with civil society under the standard procedure, or 3 months after the Committee's pre-session with civil society under the Simplified Reporting Procedure (SRP).

The Committee meets three times a year for 4 weeks each time: the first three weeks in January, May and September are the session and the fourth week in February, June and October is the pre-session. The dates of the country sessions are published on the [CRC session calendar webpage](#).

Country sessions usually take place in Geneva, Switzerland, at the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights ([OHCHR](#)) in [Palais Wilson](#).

! In March 2020, the CRC Committee is holding its 84th session in Samoa to review the States of Cook Islands, Micronesia and Tuvalu, and for the pre-session of Kiribati, becoming the first ever Human Rights Treaty Body organising an in-country session!

They are webcast live on [UN Web TV](#) and the videos are archived for future viewing.

On the first day of the session, at 10am Geneva time, a public opening is held, which includes: the adoption of the session agenda and programme of work, and updates on submissions of State reports, new ratifications, and activities of the CRC Committee. A few stakeholders (UN agencies, OHCHR Representatives and Child Rights Connect) are invited to deliver statements. A public closing is held on the last day of the session at 5pm Geneva time. The Committee also engages in a series of closed meetings throughout the session period.

II. The structure of the country session

The review of a State under the CRC (or integrated CRC and optional protocols reports) lasts two three-hour country sessions. These take place on the same day with a two-hour break or during an afternoon and the next morning (with an extended break overnight). This depends on how the meetings are scheduled.

For the review of an optional protocol only, the country session lasts half a day (three hours).

The Committee is more and more open to having a dialogue with government delegations remotely, through teleconference.

The country session is a question-and-answer meeting that will feed the Committee's Concluding Observations, and it is structured as follows:

First part (3 hours) – Day 1 at 10am or 3pm

Introduction:

- Brief opening remarks by the Chairperson
- Introduction of the State delegation and short opening statement by the head of the delegation

Questions & answers:

- First set of questions on the first 5 clusters of the Convention by the country rapporteurs or task force members, followed by other Committee members.
Although there are no official clusters of questions for the two Optional Protocols, questions are mostly around prevention, protection, prohibition and sanctions.

10-15-minute break to allow time for the State delegation to organise its replies to the questions

- Government's responses to the Committee's questions and follow-up questions from the Committee during the responses
- Second round of questions from the Committee on the 4 other clusters

Break at 1pm or 6pm. The government has time to prepare their responses to the questions, and consult with their colleagues in the capital, if possible and needed.

Second part (3 hours) – Day 1 at 3pm or Day 2 at 10am


Conclusions:

- Final questions from the Committee to try to make the government responds to the main pending questions, if any. The floor is therefore mainly for the delegation who can respond to the questions and concerns in any order. Committee members may interrupt the government speakers to ask follow-up questions, making it an interactive dialogue
- Concluding remarks from the Committee and the State party

Country Rapporteurs and Task Force

For each country session, the Committee appoints either **2 country rapporteurs** or **1 task force made of 3-4 members**.

The country rapporteurs or task force have the mandate to lead the dialogues with State Representatives during the country session. Appointments may change from the pre-session.

 Child Rights Connect will let you know who the country rapporteurs/task force members are as soon as we get the information.

State Delegation

The composition of the State Delegation is public information available on the Committee's website under the List of delegation/participants for each country [session](#).

II. Monitoring the Country Session

About the content of the dialogue

Whether you follow the session in person or remotely, it should be noted that some issues important to you may not be raised by the Committee, and that the government may avoid answering certain questions or provide an answer you do not agree with or find satisfactory. This can sometimes be frustrating, for example if there has been lots of advocacy efforts beforehand. It is therefore important to keep this in mind yourself, with your colleagues and to manage these limitations when empowering children in engaging in the CRC Reporting cycle.

I. Attending the country session in person


1. Why attend the country session in person?

Civil society should consider attending the plenary session. Although they do not have a right to speak during the meeting, they may participate as observers in order to obtain a **comprehensive picture of the dialogue with the government**.

It can also be an invaluable opportunity to **meet the government representatives** in a setting where child rights are being discussed in depth, as it can provide a strong basis for follow-up advocacy and joint activities.

Although the Committee does not meet formally with NGOs during the session, attending the country session can be an opportunity to informally meet with Committee members, particularly taskforce members for your country, to provide updates since the pre-session.

Thus, the session can be a useful opportunity to **meet with Committee members informally** before or during the plenary session to provide comment on the country session and the questions raised/not raised. You may also wish to establish contact with the Committee members to follow-up on the Concluding Observations once these are made public.

 Before each session, Child Rights Connect organises an online briefing for all children's rights defenders to provide any update and guidance, address any pending question, concern or issue and discuss advocacy strategies for the follow-up stage. For those attending the session in person, meetings with Child Rights Connect can be held 1 hour before the meeting or right after the country session.

Should children also attend the country session?

Country sessions are not really child-friendly. Since children will not be allowed to intervene during the meeting, it may be more appropriate and interesting for them to follow the dialogue online or watch selected extracts afterwards (see next section: Following the country session remotely through the webcast for further information).

2. Accreditation to enter the UN buildings

Any observer to the country session should obtain the necessary accreditation from OHCHR. The only limitation to the number of participants is space in the rooms.

Detailed information about the procedures to follow and the contact person can be found [here](#).

! Failing to seek accreditation from OHCHR will prevent you from accessing the building and attending your country session.

Accreditation to the UN is done in 2 steps:

1. Before the country session:

- ✓ Participants must register through the unique OHCHR online platform for accreditation [Indico](#). The session link will be available on the [CRC webpage](#), under “Upcoming Events”. Please consider that you will have to create an account, fill in a form and upload an ID photo. Kindly allow two working days for your request to be processed.

2. On the day of the country session:

- ✓ Go to Villa Les Feuillantines (street address: 13 avenue de la Paix, 1202 Geneva, Switzerland). Bring the confirmation of registration which includes the QR code and your passport or your ID card. Once you have collected your badge, go to the security gate of Palais Wilson (street address: 52 rue des Pâquis, 1201 Geneva, Switzerland) where the country session takes place. Entrance is allowed 1 hour prior to the start of the country session.

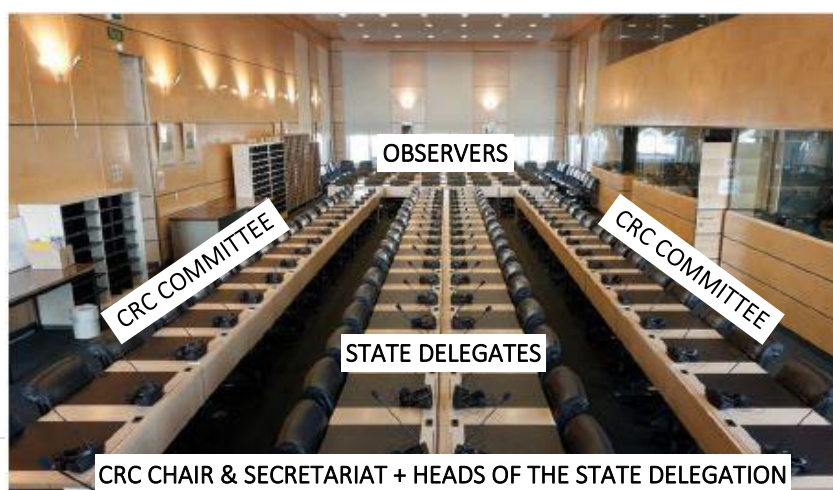
3. Session meeting room layout

The session usually takes place in the meeting room on the ground floor (see picture below).

The Chair of the Committee leads the meeting from the podium and the heads of the State delegation and the CRC Secretary will sit next to him or her.

The Committee members sit around the tables on the sides and the rest of State delegates sit around the tables in the middle.

Observers, including NGOs representatives, sit at the rows of tables at the back of the room.



Source: UNOG

II. Following the country session remotely through the webcast

All country sessions are webcast in English, as well as in another relevant language: French, Spanish or national language when available.

The videos are webcast live and then archived for future viewing on the [UN Web TV](#): click on LIVE NOW or MEETINGS & EVENTS -> HUMAN RIGHTS TREATY BODIES -> COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD -> select current or past sessions.

The webcast has already helped to raise awareness and understanding about the Committee's review of States and live streams have been watched by NGOs, children, UN agency country teams, as well as government and NHRI officials across the world.

Archived videos can be used as a basis for awareness-raising and training on the work of the Committee, or for advocacy activities to follow up on the Committee's recommendations.

Supporting children to follow the country session webcast

It is essential where possible that children who engaged in previous steps of the reporting cycle are supported to follow the country session and provide feedback to accompanying organisations and the Committee on how their views were reflected during the dialogue between the Committee and the State, in the most appropriate way according to their evolving capacity.

Check our case study on Moldova: [Webcast – An Opportunity for Children to Engage in the Session](#)

III. How to effectively engage in the country session?

The idea is to monitor how the Government is responding to the Committee's questions in fulfilling its child rights' obligations. It is also a way to follow whether the issues, concerns or recommendations you might have raised during the pre-session or through your written submissions are taken into consideration in the dialogue.

! As the Concluding Observations will only reflect the issues raised during the dialogue with the State party, it is important for civil society to monitor the meeting.

1. If you are in Geneva

During the breaks of the country session, you can approach country rapporteurs/members of the task force and other Committee members to inform them about your comments on the dialogue. The Committee members decide on how to use this information during the dialogue with the State.

! You should not assist your government delegation in responding to the questions. Your independence could be questioned if you were seen doing so. You can obviously seize the opportunity to approach the delegation and have meetings with them, but you cannot be involved in their dialogue with the Committee.

2. Through the UN webcast

The webcast is a useful advocacy tool and an opportunity to bring part of the reporting process home, to raise awareness at national level and to organise capacity building activities.

If you are in Geneva but your colleagues could not come, they can watch the webcast of the country session live and transmit their questions and comments directly to you. You will, in turn, be able to transmit them to the Committee members during the breaks.

In case none of your colleagues are present in Geneva, Child Rights Connect can try to transmit some of the questions and comments -sent by email to Child Rights Connect- to the Committee members during the breaks. This is not always guaranteed when the questions and comments are of a high number.

We advise you to watch the webcast of a recent session to get inspired by the activities you would like to organise around it, how you can best benefit from it and what is technically feasible.

We have collected examples of concrete activities organised by organisations:

- Reuniting children and/or NGOs, Ombudsperson or Representatives, press and media... to watch the webcast, discuss the content of the dialogue and debrief together.
- Sending live comments to your colleagues attending the country session or to Child Rights Connect to possibly approach the Committee and convey messages on your behalf.
- Giving group or individual press interviews
- Sharing live comments through social media
- Drafting press releases

Please consider the following:

- The length of the country session: one entire day/two half days
- The language is quite technical and not everyone is familiar with the reporting process. It is then required to provide background information, short briefing on the reporting cycle, to guide or animate the discussions.
- As per the materials, you will need a good internet connection and a computer. Possibly a beamer or a large screen and speakers if you wish to project the video.
- Mitigation of any risks at national level, such as preventing of reprisals for organising such a meeting
- Participation of some stakeholders might involve costs (transportation, lunch, etc.)

Please, share your experience at crcreporting@childrightsconnect.org



Child Rights Connect also covers each country session on social media via its [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) accounts.

IV. What can children's rights defenders decide to make public?

1. Publicising your engagement

- ✓ You decide if you want to make your presence in Geneva, or your activities undertaken around the country session public, by being active on social media or engaging with media.
- ✓ To ensure the safe presence of national actors, including children, no photos or filming of the observers are allowed in the room. Only photos and recording of the Committee and Government representatives can be taken, and without disturbing the dialogue.

! Be aware that some children's rights defenders attending the same country session as you or to another meeting taking place before or after yours, **could be at risk if their presence was known to others**. Please respect their needs and their safety.

! Children are more vulnerable and may not fully realise the risks and consequences of not following the principle of confidentiality for themselves and for others. It is essential that this is clearly explained to them in advance of a meeting with the Committee and reiterated just after the meeting.

2. What to do if you fear reprisals for your engagement with the Committee?

If **you feel concerned** about possible forms of reprisals relating to your presence at a country session, please inform Ms. Allegra Franchetti (afranchetti@ohchr.org), the Secretary of the Committee and us (crcreporting@childrightsconnect.org) as soon as possible.

If **you experience reprisals after your presence** at a country session, know that the Committee, along with all other UN treaty bodies, has developed a series of guidelines to "assist and protect individuals and groups alleging that they have been the object of intimidation or reprisals for seeking to cooperate or cooperating with them".

In this context, the Committee has appointed **Ms. Renate Winter**, the Committee member from Austria, as its Rapporteur on the issue of reprisals. She is in charge of assessing your situation and decide how the Committee should react.

You can find more information about the safety of Human Rights Defenders in Geneva, protection and reporting of reprisals on the NGO Welcome Desk [website](#).

! Please read the [Guide against Intimidations or Reprisals](#) (San José Guidelines) to have more details on the role of the UN Treaty Bodies in this subject.

Contact Details of the Committee's Secretariat:

Committee on the Rights of the Child
Human Rights Treaties Division (HRTD)
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)
CH-1211 Geneva 10 (Switzerland)
Tel.: +41 22 917 91 41 - Fax: +41 22 917 90 08
E-mail: ohchr-crc@un.org

III. Following-up to the country session

I. What outcome documents and reports are made available?

1. Concluding Observations

On the last day of a session, the Committee adopts the [Concluding Observations](#) for all States reviewed during that session. These Concluding Observations point out the progress achieved, the main areas of concern and recommendations for how States can improve their compliance and implementation of the CRC and the OPs by States.

The Concluding Observations are public documents made available in English on the website of the Committee soon after the session, and also sent to both the State party and the UN General Assembly. They are then translated into French and Spanish (the other 2 working languages of the Committee), and Arabic, Chinese or Russian if one of these languages is more relevant for the reviewed State.

The Concluding Observations should be widely disseminated to those who were involved in the reporting process, as well as the broader child rights community, including through the creation of blogs, podcasts and films. A press conference around the time of the adoption of the concluding observations can also be organised.

Tips! Translating the Concluding Observations into national and local languages, if not done by the State, and making them available as soon as possible in accessible formats, including child-friendly, is a way to ensure that different stakeholders can take ownership and monitor progress. Where possible, we encourage you to advocate for the State to take forward these actions!

2. Meeting summary

A meeting summary of each country session is produced by the United Nations and published after the session on the official Web Site of the United Nations Office at Geneva. It can be found as part of the Press Releases & Meeting Summaries available on the [website](#).

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

3. Child Rights Connect session overview

Child Rights Connect produces its own summary country session reports, highlighting reporting status, main issues discussed, and main recommendations included in the Concluding Observations. The reports can be found in Child Rights Connect's [overviews of each session and pre-session](#).

Our info pack also includes our children's participation monitoring and analysis as well as the status of ratifications, work on General Comments and relevant activities of the Committee and of Child Rights Connect around each session and the pre-session.

II. How to follow-up to the Concluding Observations?

The Concluding Observations of the CRC and all the other Treaty Bodies are not legally binding and so they are not enforceable at national level.

The Committee does not have a formal follow-up procedure, which would provide for the periodic assessment of the implementation of certain recommendations. At each periodic review, the Committee takes into account previous Concluding Observations and compares these with the progress detailed in the State report. At the national level, the Committee depends on independent national monitoring mechanisms to ensure that its recommendations are being implemented by the State.

! For both the State and civil society organisations, the publication of the concluding observations does not and should not signal the end of the CRC reporting process. The cycle should not end there!

The follow-up process is actually key to achieving positive change for children's rights and securing a real impact on law, policy and practice at national and local levels. Therefore, it is important to ensure that there are adequate human and financial resources for follow-up processes, including empowering children.

Tips! Read the guide [How to Advance Children's Rights using Recommendations from United Nations and Regional Human Rights Monitoring and Review Processes](#), developed by Save the Children, Child Rights Connect and other partners. This guide aims to empower and inspire civil society practitioners to follow-up, use and make the most of these recommendations as part of their daily work to advance realisation of children's rights in their countries. To that end, it provides a *step-by-step* plan of activities to consider, with case studies and practical tips and formats to help us in that journey. It also provides some additional links with background information for those of us with less experience in this field.

Read the guide on implementation of recommendations of human rights mechanisms: [How to Follow Up on United Nations Human Rights Recommendations - A Practical Guide for Civil Society](#). Additional languages are available on the [civil society webpage](#).

Below is a non-exhaustive list of activities and actions that can be undertaken at national level, to which Child Rights Connect might provide its technical assistance and capacity building support:

1. Advocacy activities

Concluding Observations can be integrated into on-going advocacy activities, using them as a tool to reinforce long-term advocacy objectives and drive the child rights agenda forward, as well as to put certain issues on top of the State's agenda.

You should analyse and prioritise the Concluding Observations based on your goals and strategies to assess which can be realistically integrated in your workplan.

2. Developing tools to monitor and measure the implementation progress

Although States are responsible for implementing the CRC and the OPs, NGOs and NHRIs should regularly monitor and assess the implementation of Concluding Observations. This can help inform your activities at national level, ensure comprehensive forthcoming submissions to the

Committee (as well as other relevant UN human rights mechanisms) and to inform any advocacy with the State to ensure that the State is meeting its obligations.

This should include consistently collecting and analysing disaggregated data and information to determine the extent to which legislation, policy and practice are in compliance with the CRC and the Ops.


3. Working with government

Depending on the national context, civil society organisations can encourage the government to follow up on the Committee's recommendations and to develop indicators and national action plans. They can meet government officials, as well as UNICEF, other relevant UN agencies and children, in order to discuss the Concluding Observations and the steps which can be taken to implement them. In particular, it is possible to lobby ministers and officials to prepare a substantial response, an action plan or a roadmap of State's actions for the next 5 years.

4. Organising a follow-up visit by Committee Members

Civil society organisations may invite Committee members to conduct a field visit in order to meet with government officials, NGOs, NHRIs and children to discuss steps to be taken to follow up on the Committee's recommendations. These visits may be official and in response to an invitation issued by the State party. Committee members may also conduct informal visits, which do not involve an official invitation by the government.

Such visit allows larger numbers of children, and children from more diverse backgrounds, to actively participate in the CRC reporting process and to meet directly with Committee members, in their own environment.

 **Child Rights Connect can help you to identify the relevant member(s) to invite based on thematic and regional expertise, as well as other treaty body representatives. We can also provide you with comments and advices on the concept note of such visit you might organise, based on previous experiences.**

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

5. Documenting the reporting process

Civil society organisations may take up research activities as a basis for further areas of work where there is a lack of data or knowledge on a given issue. Annual or biannual progress reports on the implementation of the recommendations, based on indicators, can be produced and campaigns on priority themes from the Concluding Observations launched.

Training and capacity building may also be organised to contribute to a better understanding amongst stakeholders. It is important to collect lessons learned in planning for the next periodic reporting process.

Our follow-up case studies

To promote good practice and share examples of how the recommendations contained in the Concluding Observations have been translated into concrete activities, Child Rights Connect gathers case studies and publishes them on its website: www.childrightsconnect.org/publications/

Some examples of activities that NGOs can undertake include:

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

III. Engaging with other Human Rights Treaty Bodies and UN mechanisms

Even if the UN Committee on the rights of the child is the specialized body for children's rights, the recommendations made by other Treaty Bodies and UN human rights mechanisms can be of high relevance for children's rights defenders and many opportunities exist to engage.

Cross-referencing UN recommendations in follow-up to the CRC Concluding Observations is important to avoid following up in a compartmentalised or fragmented manner. A holistic and coordinated approach can help you to mainstream the children's rights issues, strengthen your advocacy and its positive impact, increase collaboration and coordination at national level across the broader UN human rights system, and more importantly, to promote children's rights as human rights!

! The [Human Rights Index](#) is a good tool for mapping the outcomes of other UN human rights mechanisms.

The different United Nations bodies that organisations can interact with to advocate for and advance children's rights include:

1. Human rights treaty bodies

Core international human rights treaties:

- [Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination](#)
- [Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#)
- [Human Rights Committee](#)

- [Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women](#)
- [Committee against Torture](#)
- [Committee on Migrant Workers](#)
- [Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture](#)
- [Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#)
- [Committee on Enforced Disappearances](#)

2. The Human Rights Council (HRC)


The HRC is an inter-governmental body that covers all human rights. It holds an Annual Day on the Rights of the Child on a different topic every March, resulting in the adoption of a resolution. Through different initiatives, the HRC covers many themes focused on children's rights, such as child early and forced marriage, education, birth registration, violence against children, refugee and migrant children, to name but a few.

In addition, recommendations of special procedures (country and thematic mandate), decisions of Treaty Bodies on individual cases, the work of the subsidiary bodies of the Human Rights Council, such as the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of indigenous peoples, the Forum on minority issues, the Social forum, and the Forum on business and human rights can be explored.

 Child Rights Connect can help you identify advocacy opportunities at the HRC based on your priorities.

3. The Universal Periodic Review (UPR)

The UPR is a mechanism under the HRC, whereby the overall human rights situation of each UN Member State is reviewed by all UN Member States, according to a fixed calendar. The UPR covers all human rights, including child rights. Although only States can take part in the review, NGOs can get involved in a variety of ways to make sure that key children's rights concerns are raised during the discussions and included in resulting recommendations. [Read our UPR factsheets.](#)

 Child Rights Connect is supporting the engagement of children in the UPR process, in partnership with the organisation [UPR-info](#).

Annex – Background Information on Committee Members

To better prepare for the country session, here is a general overview of who the Committee members are and what their background is. This will help you have an idea of the main areas of expertise of Committee members.

The Committee is made of 18 independent experts on child rights from 18 different countries. It is important to keep in mind that **Committee members are elected in their personal capacity** for a four-year term and can be re-elected.¹

The current composition of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, as well as information on the members' background, can be found here: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CRC/Pages/Membership.aspx>

! All Committee's country sessions with States are public and webcasted. If you want to get a sense of the questions asked by the Committee, check the [UN Web TV archives](#).

All Committee members are experts in different subjects related to the rights of children, who tend to ask questions in line with their expertise and interests.



Child Rights Connect mapped **the questions that Committee members most frequently ask States and the thematic areas they usually cover** during country sessions.

! Please note that the information included in this section is not meant to be comprehensive and has been drafted solely by Child Rights Connect for informative purposes.

¹ For more information on Committee members' nomination and election, check our fact sheet at : http://www.childrightsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Fact-sheet-CRC-Elections_ChildRightsConnect_-English.pdf

Thematic issues frequently raised by Committee members

| Committee Members | Issues |
|--|---|
| <i>Suzanne AHO</i> | Birth registration, child trafficking, adoption, health, sexual education, early pregnancy, social welfare, child marriage |
| <i>Hynd AYOUBI IDRISSE</i> | Budget, laws and policies, data collection, cooperation with civil society, best interest of the child, corporal punishment, juvenile justice, domestic violence |
| <i>Rinchen CHOPHEL</i> | Violence against children, child marriage, corporal punishment, child labour, child sexual abuse, exploitation and trafficking, law enforcement procedures, public health |
| <i>Bragi GUDBRANDSSON</i> | Sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, children with disabilities, child participation, alternative care |
| <i>Philip JAFFE</i> | Respect for the views of the child, child parliament, access to information, corporal punishment, mental health |
| <i>Sopio KILADZE</i> | Legal frameworks for the advancements of children's rights, social rights of the child |
| <i>Mary BELOFF</i> | Juvenile justice, family law, children deprived of liberty, violence against children |
| <i>Faith MARSHALL-HARRIS</i> | Laws and policies, family law, nationality, birth registration, child labour, juvenile justice |
| <i>Benyam Dawit MEZMUR</i> | Child victims of abuse, quality of education, definition of the child, general principles, civil rights and freedoms, budget |
| <i>Rosaria CORREA</i> | Laws and legislations, sexual violence and exploitation, family law, |
| <i>Mikiko OTANI</i> | Civil rights and freedom, birth registration, right to privacy, access to information, freedom of religion, child participation, environmental health, child human rights defenders |
| <i>Luis Ernesto PEDERNERA REYNA</i> | Laws and legislations, freedom of association, ratification, independent monitoring complaint, right to privacy, cruel and inhuman treatment, sexual exploitation, cooperation with civil society |
| <i>Zara RATOUE</i> | Social affairs, child protection |
| <i>Thuwayba AL BARWANI</i> | Education, general measures of implementation |
| <i>Aissatou ALASSANE SIDIKOU</i> | Traditional practices, education, social welfare and child protection |
| <i>Ann Marie SKELTON</i> | Childcare and protection act, laws and policies, budget, OPIC, access to justice, juvenile justice, education, alternative care |
| <i>Velina TODOROVA</i> | Violence against children, cruel inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, laws and policies, family law |
| <i>Benoît VAN KEIRSBILCK</i> | Migrant and refugee children, access to justice, juvenile justice, child protection, socio-legal defence of children, children deprived of liberty |

Examples of questions asked by Committee members under each cluster

A. General Measures of Implementation

Independent monitoring

Hynd Ayoubi Idrissi

What has been planned to make sure that children have confidential access to the monitoring mechanisms?

Luis Ernesto Pedernera Reyna

How many complaints does the national human rights institution has received in terms of violations of the rights of the child? And how have you process these complaints, in particular, since the creation through the special unit dedicated to the rights of women, children and people with disabilities?

Allocation of resources

Benyam Dawit Mezmur

We acknowledge there have been financial challenges. What is the budget cut for education?

Ann Marie Skelton

Was this new Childcare and Protection Act costed before it was brought into operation? Is there a specific budget to run this new law?

Thuwayba Al Barwani

Is there an assigned budget specifically allocated to combat child trafficking, prostitution and pornography?

Ratification of the Optional Protocols

Velina Todorova

What are the discrepancies between the law and the provisions of the Optional Protocol on a Communications Procedure (OPIC) that would pose a problem and prevent you from ratifying this protocol?

Luis Ernesto Pedernera Reyna

Do you have a timeframe for the updating of the Human Rights Treaties whose ratification that is still pending?

Implementation of the CRC in national legislation

Sophie Kiladze

Are adequate human technical and financial resources allocated for CRC implementation in national legislation?

Comprehensive policy and strategy

Sophie Kiladze

Child rights impact assessment procedures: what is the status of the elaboration process?

Ombudsperson

Data collection

Hynd Ayoubi Idrissi

Data collection is an area that needs to be strengthened, especially in relation to indigenous population, orphans, etc. What measures are being taken by the State?

Thuwayba Al Barwani

Could you please shed light on the progress made on the data collection and research that is being done to collect disaggregated data on all the remaining categories?

Cooperation with Civil Society

Suzanne Aho

How does the State work with NGOs? Is there any subvention for NGOs that endeavours to work for child protection?

B. Definition of the child

Definition of the child

Luis Pedernera

Marriage under 18 is not totally prohibited, there are some exceptions possible: does the State plan to introduce a ban on marriage under 18?

C. General Principles

Non-discrimination

Zara Ratou

According to the information gathered, there is discrimination against certain groups of children. Can this be explained? What common approaches are being taken to end such discrimination?

Aïssatou Alassane Sidikou

According to a study, 43% of children have experienced discriminatory treatment. The government maintains that the law provides sufficient protection against discrimination. What measures are being taken to publicize this law? What strategy or mechanism does the government intend to put in place to combat discrimination?

Rosaria Correa

What are you doing to ensure that your plans on non-discrimination are properly and effectively enforced? Do you have a data system on violations to the right to non-discrimination to prevent hate speech?

Best interest of the child

Rosaria Correa

How do you conceptualize or define the best interest of the child? Do you have any form of training for civil servants to ensure the best interest of the child? Is this training entuned with the General Comment

14 of the CRC?

Ann Marie Skelton

Do judges and magistrates consider the best interest of the child? If so, how?

Respect for the views of the child

Faith Marshall-Harris

How are children from vulnerable groups included and their views represented?

Mikiko Otani

Despite the recognition of the right of the child to be heard, it is rarely in practice. What is the current practice? Are there any guidelines developed? What are the views of the government to the need of special measures to ensure inclusive participation?

Hynd Ayoubi Idrissi

What steps are being taken to ensure child participation? What is being done to address cultural resistance?

Rosaria Correa

What strategy do you implement to guarantee the participation of children? What measures have been taken to support civil society with that?

D. Civil Rights and Freedoms

Nationality

Suzanne Aho

Registration of travellers and Roma children: are there facilities to declare the birth of those children?

Bragi Gudbrandsson

Do you envisage amending certain provisions so that the child does not find himself in a situation of statelessness?

Birth registration

Suzanne Aho

What is the deadline to obtain a birth certificate? What is the rate of non-declaration? And what is the rate of children with anonymous parents?

The registration system seems to be too centralized; how do people from rural areas register? Is the registration free? If not, is there any scope to remove the fee?

Is there any programme to raise awareness on the importance of birth registration?

Mikiko Otani

Is the requirement of the forensic medical examination still a challenge to the children born in the home and in the settings other than hospitals? Have you taken awareness raising measures and a training for hospital staff, administrators and other health professionals through the country on this new procedure? Do you have a data collection system to identify the number of non-registration of births and monitor if this new procedure has positive impacts of reducing non-registration?

Benyam Dawit Mezmur

Would the State Party remove the fees for birth registration?

Freedom of association and peaceful assembly

Luis Ernesto Pedernera Reyna

How are children involved in these human rights associations in schools? How are they created? Do they become members through elections? What powers do they have? What activities do they carry out? What resources do they receive? Do children know about these human rights associations?

Benoit Van Keirsbilck

What is the possibility for children to be involved in structures of a political nature?

Freedom of religion

Mikiko Otani

Can you confirm if the decision of students being allowed to not attend religion class, as part of the curriculum, if a written request is made by their parents, is actually issued? Can you inform the Committee if any legislative measures to amend a national education law which was found unconstitutional or any other measures in response to this constitutional core decision has been made or planned? If this provision is still effective, how the right with a child to opt out attending religious class is actually implemented? How are the students and their parents informed of the option not to attend religion class? How many students are choosing not to attend? How are those students who don't attend religion class treated in the school?

Child parliament

Philip Jaffé

How does the government ensure that all children are represented in the child parliament?

Aissatou Alassane Sidikou

How is the government guaranteeing a democratic process to ensure that children from all backgrounds can be part of youth parliaments?

Protection of privacy and access to appropriate information

Mikiko Otani

How do you ensure that the children are effectively protected from broadcasting their images or statement which should not be? Are there any safeguard mechanisms to prevent such broadcastings? Are there any monitoring body for the internet services?

Velina Todorova

Media initiatives to discuss personal stories of victims of sexual abuses: are there similar intentions as far as corporal punishment is concerned, somehow to be covered by this good media practice?

Philip Jaffé

Is the transmission of information culturally available to children?

E. Violence against children

Corporal punishment

Rosaria Correa

What type of sanction is imposed on parents who are engaged in corporal punishment? What is the national strategy to combat it?

Philip Jaffé

What kinds of specific strategies do you have to combat the use of corporal punishment?

Faith Marshall-Harris

Is corporal punishment banned in schools or in all settings? If not, when do you plan to do so?

Velina Todorova

Are there plans of the governments to address corporal punishment in the family? Any plans to hold some awareness campaigns or some training for parents?

Abuse and neglect

Rinchen Chophel

The law allows for the use of “proportionate educational measures”. When the measure is disproportionate, it can be dealt with in the criminal justice system. What is the difference for you between a proportionate and disproportionate measure?

Harmful practices

Faith Marshall Harris

Are there any guarantees in place to avoid unnecessary medical and surgical treatment on intersex children?

Sexual exploitation and sexual abuse

Rosaria Correa

Progress has been made in terms of the criminalization of sexual offences, regarding the extension of the timeline for the statute of limitations for child sexual abuse. I would like to have more information on the public policy drawn up to address this issue?

Luis Ernesto Pedernera Reyna

How many boys and girls are affected by sexual exploitation and what concrete measures have been taken to care for the children who have been sexual exploited and abused?

Suzanne Aho

What programmes are available for children victim of sexual violence and abuse in order for them to recover both physically and psychologically?

Bragi Gudbrandsson

How are sexual abuse cases managed? Is there mandatory reporting?
Are there any help lines dedicated to children?

Violence against children

Benyam Dawit Mezmur

Could you please clarify if your State allows that someone who has violated a child's human right is not necessarily punished if violence was performed in good faith?

Luis Ernesto Pedernera Reyna

Are prison guards trained? Are children informed of the fact that torture is a crime under law? Do protection measures make it possible for people to report cases of torture, cruel and degrading treatments?

Helpline

Hynd Ayoubi Idrissi

How do you guarantee that children have access to the toll-free number for complaints?

Mikiko Otani

Is there child-friendly information on the complaint system created and disseminated? Would you provide us with the information on the number of the complains in relation to the children?

Velina Todorova

How is the safety of child that makes use of helplines and independents complaint mechanisms ensured? What are the consequences for the child, for example is there any follow-up of the complaints or not?

Child trafficking

Benoît Van Keirsbilck

International adoption: what follow-up is given to the recommendations? What about enforced disappearances? What is being done to prevent international adoptions from covering up child trafficking?

F. Family environment and alternative care

Rosaria Correa

What measures do you have to prevent citizens travelling to other countries to undergo surrogacy?

Rosia Correa

When parents separate, what services are provided to the child?

Alternative care

Ann Marie Skelton

What is your vision for the care of children in a proper foster care system? Why do you have children so young in institutions?

Philip Jaffé

What is the estimated number of children separated from their parents?

Rosaria Correa

How many children are taken in State care as a result of their parents' separation?

Children of incarcerated parents

Faith Marshall-Harris

What about visitation rights for children with incarcerated parents?

Rosaria Correa

What are you doing to maintain the link between the child and the parent(s)?

Early childhood development

Suzanne Aho

In your report, you talk about maintenance payments and the fact that if the father cannot pay, the mother has to provide financial support to the child. What happens if none of the parents can afford?

G. Basic Health and Welfare

Health and health services

Faith Marshall-Harris

Why do children accumulate huge debts for health care?

Adolescent health

Rosaria Correa

The suicide rate of transgender adolescents is high. What is done in terms of prevention?

Reproductive health

Suzanne Aho

Criminalisation of abortion unless it is a rape: don't you think this will encourage clandestine abortions? Should you not decriminalise abortions?

Children with disabilities

Suzanne Aho

What is the percentage of children with disabilities and what is the budget for these children? Are there any programs for early detection of disability?

Environmental health

Velina Todorova

How the current climate mitigation policy, including in relation to domestic heating and transportation sector, is compatible with your obligation to protect the rights of children, in particular, the rights to health, food, and an adequate standard of living?

Sophie Kiladze

Climate change: how issues such as ocean acidification and the impact on the marine ecosystem are addressed? How are children involved in such plans?

H. Education, Leisure and Cultural Activities

Inclusive education

Velina Todorova

Are you planning to implement policies to ensure quality inclusive education for children with disabilities?

Hynd Ayoubi Idrissi

What measures are envisaged to upgrade schools for inclusive education?

Access to education

Benoît Van Keirsbilck

Can children in an irregular situation in the country have access to education? What has been done for children and their access to education during the Covid-19 pandemic?

Benyam Dawit Mezmur

Are there disparities in access to education between rural areas and cities? What are the measures and what are the positive impacts in this regard?

Ann Marie Skelton

Do you have a monitoring group on home schooling?

Bullying

Ann Marie Skelton

Could the delegation address allegations of bullying, and cyber-bullying in schools?

Human and children's rights education

Rosaria Correa

Do you have any national rights plan or program for children to learn about their rights?

School drop-out

Benoît Van Keirsbilck

What are the figures for school drop-out?

Hynd Ayoubi Idrissi

With regard to socially and economically disadvantaged classes, can you tell us the percentage of economically disadvantaged children who are in a normal curriculum?

Leisure

Ann Marie Skelton

To what extent was child participation ensured in urban planning processes, and making sure children had a place to play?

I. Special Protection Measures

Vulnerable groups of children

Ann Marie Skelton

What efforts are being made to ensure the protection of children in refugee camps? What was the Government's approach to the return of those children?

Child labor

Luis Ernesto Pedernera Reyna

Child labor is a serious problem in the State party. Where are you in the fight against child labor? Where are you in the revision of the labor code?

Children in conflict with the law: age of criminal responsibility

Hynd Ayoubi Idrissi

Are you willing to reduce the age of criminal responsibility?

Juvenile justice

Mary Beloff

How many adolescents have been convicted to the maximum sentences? Did the highest court in the country raise the incompatibility of direct application of those sentences with the UNCRC?

What measures are being implemented in the country when a child is accused below the minimum criminal age and what are the procedures followed?

Luis Ernesto Pedernera Reyna

Is the National Human Rights Institution allowed to visit places of detention? Why do they need to ask permissions and cannot make unannounced visits?

Children in street situations

Suzanna Aho

What issues do children in the streets face? What measures do you have to address these challenges?

Refugee children

Zara Ratou

What measures are taken to ensure the well-being and development of refugee children?

Rosaria Correa

Could you tell us what protection measures you have for non-accompanied minors?

Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography

Philip Jaffé

Are you considering combating child prostitution?

Are there any specialised units in the police to address cases of sexual violence against children?

Thuwayba Al Barwani

What progress has been made in the implementation of the action plan on trafficking of human beings? Have all resources - human technical financial been allocated to ensure efficient implementation of this plan?