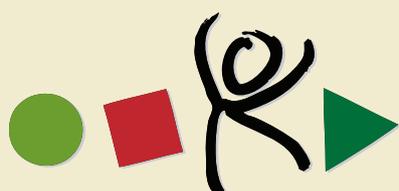


Together with children – for children

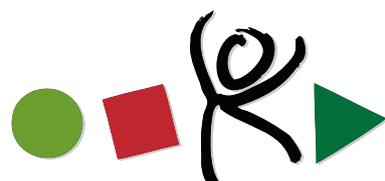
A guide for non-governmental organizations
accompanying children in CRC reporting



ngo group for the crc

Together with children – for children

**A guide for non-governmental
organizations accompanying children
in CRC reporting**



ngo group for the crc

Together with children – for children: A guide for non-governmental organizations accompanying children in CRC reporting

For copies of this publication and further information, please contact:

NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child
1, rue de Varembe
1202 Geneva
Switzerland
Tel: +41 22 740 47 30
Fax: +41 22 740 46 83
secretariat@childrightsnet.org
www.childrightsnet.org

Author: Sam Dimmock (Children's Rights Alliance for England, CRAE)

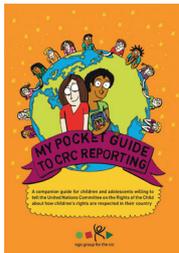
Project supervisor: Lisa Myers (NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child)

Editor: Lisa Myers and Séverine Jacomy-Vité

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The NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child

The NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child is a global network of 77 national and international NGOs committed to ensuring that all children fully enjoy their rights as defined by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The NGO Group works through its secretariat and thematic working groups to fulfill its mission to facilitate the promotion, implementation and monitoring of the CRC.

Since it was established in 1983, the NGO Group has provided a coordinated platform for NGO action and played a central role in key child rights developments at the international level. In addition, it promotes the full implementation of the CRC through its work with national and international NGOs throughout the world.

The NGO Group's strategic priorities are to:

1. Enhance the effective engagement of NGOs and other relevant partners in the CRC reporting process and other activities of the Committee on the Rights of the Child.
2. Mainstream child rights in relevant activities of other United Nations human rights mechanisms and procedures.
3. Promote the realisation of child rights at national level through the effective implementation of the recommendations and other outputs of the Committee and other relevant international human rights mechanisms.
4. Pursue and support international advocacy on priority child rights issues through coordinated action with members and partners.

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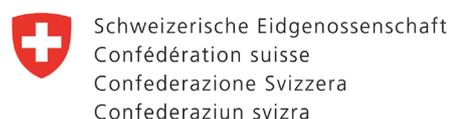
In addition to the author (Sam Dimmock) and project manager (Lisa Myers), members of the Advisory Group were:

Child and young people representatives: Cheney Cheng (Kids' Dream – Hong Kong), Daniela Gancear (Child Rights Information Centre – Moldova), Laila Garcia (MNNATSOP – Peru), Orlando Marcelo (MNNATSOP – Peru), Roseline Olang (Kenya Alliance for the Advancement of Children – Kenya), Rakibul Hassan Raku (Child Brigade – Bangladesh) and Ben Sawyer (Funky Dragon – Wales).

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Preface



Ms. Yanghee Lee

The Committee on the Rights of the Child places great importance on the participation of children in the reporting process under the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The present Guide presents practical advice and encourages NGOs to engage children throughout the process and illustrates this through a number of case studies of experiences to date.

The periodic reporting under the Convention is a human rights monitoring mechanism the relevance of which depends on the availability of relevant information from a range of sources. While the State party report is the key element in the process, the Convention through article 45 clearly sets out that “*the Committee may invite the specialized agencies, the United Nations Children’s Fund and other competent bodies as it may consider appropriate to provide expert advice on the implementation of the Convention*”. In the view of the Committee, child-led organizations are clearly among the competent bodies from which it wishes to receive expert advice in conjunction with its reviews of the implementation of the rights enshrined in the Convention. The Committee encourages UNICEF and NGOs to assist child-led organizations and include them in the reporting process and facilitate child-led organizations to review, monitor and comment on implementation of recommendations and to be involved in follow-up activities.

The Committee is very pleased that this Guide has been published so shortly after the adoption of its General Comment no. 12 (2009) on “*The Right of the Child to Heard*”. The General Comment explores article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which is one of the four general principles of the Convention and as such should be considered in the interpretation and implementation of all other rights. The General Comment provides States with practical guidance on the interpretation of this right in a number of spheres and urges States to develop legislation, policy and practice necessary to achieve full implementation of article 12. Notably, the General Comment encourages States to actively consult children and create spaces for meaningful participation and representation. The Committee also welcomed the significant contributions by UNICEF and NGOs in promoting awareness-raising on children’s right to be heard and encouraged them to further promote child participation in all matters affecting them, including at the grass-roots, community, and national or international levels, and to facilitate exchanges of best practices.

This Guide provides an excellent example of how national NGOs can actively involve children throughout the reporting process. As also affirmed in the General Comment; “*The Committee welcomes written reports and additional oral information submitted by child organizations and children’s representatives in the monitoring process of child rights implementation by States parties, and encourages States parties and NGOs to support children to present their views to the Committee.*” The Committee emphasises that reporting to the Committee should be seen as a process of which the dialogue with the State party is a component, however the creation of national civil society alliances for

the analysis and exchange of information as well as follow-up activities are of crucial importance. We hope this Guide will inspire NGOs to involve children in all stages of the reporting process as their views are key in order to ensure that the implementation of the Convention is monitored directly by those most concerned- the children themselves.

Ms. Yanghee Lee

Chairperson

UN Committee on the Rights of the Child

Introduction

In recent years, children (those under the age of 18) have taken an increasingly active role in the reporting process for the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Supporting children to engage in human rights monitoring in a meaningful and effective way presents many challenges. NGOs that have involved children in CRC reporting at local, provincial, national and international levels have told us that practical advice about what works, what to do and what to expect has been difficult to find.

Involvement in the CRC reporting process can begin with simply telling children about their human rights. Children can be part of a social movement to raise awareness of children's rights violations in their local area or at national level. They can carry out a research project to collect children's views on the exercise of their rights. One aspect of engaging children in the CRC reporting process is supporting them to discuss their concerns with the Committee on the Rights of the Child (the Committee) in the context of a State party examination. Involvement can also mean disseminating concluding observations, monitoring a government's implementation of the CRC, or campaigning on children's rights issues in a domestic context, including in favour of global developments such as the new communications procedure for the CRC.¹ It can mean one, some or all of these things.

These guidelines aim to provide a practical guide for NGOs to facilitate children's engagement in all aspects of the CRC reporting process. They are based on the experiences of NGOs and children, and explore issues NGOs will need to take into consideration when supporting and promoting children's involvement. They also include short case studies, some practical materials, some checklists and tips that NGOs may want to adapt for their own work to support children to engage in human rights monitoring and evaluation.

These guidelines have been drafted as a result of the collaboration of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and an international advisory group of NGOs and children. We hope that they will support NGOs to address the barriers, structures and practices that continue to limit children's involvement, and continue to achieve children's meaningful, genuine and permanent involvement in the reporting process for the Convention on the Rights of the Child.²



ngo group for the convention on the rights of the child

¹ Check out the latest developments on the communications procedure on the NGO Group website: <http://www.childrightsnet.org/>

² For more information on different approaches used by NGOs to engage children in the CRC reporting process, refer to *Children as change agents: guidelines for children's participation in periodic reporting on the Convention on the Rights of the Child*, produced by World Vision; and NGO Group for the CRC (2009), *Maximising children's engagement in the reporting process for the Convention on the Rights of the Child*, NGO Group for the CRC, 2009: <http://www.crin.org/ngogroup/infodetail.asp?ID=21348>

1. Foundations

Following key principles

Engaging children in the CRC reporting process gives children the opportunity to share their own views, experiences and perspectives with the Committee on the Rights of the Child and, furthermore, to engage in their own children's rights advocacy. There are many different, and equally effective, ways in which children can engage in and have a real impact on the CRC reporting process. All of these are underpinned by several fundamental principles:

- ▶ Achieving **meaningful participation** by supporting children to have ownership over the process; ensuring children are involved in designing and delivering activities; and ensuring children are involved in decision-making with regard to the extent of their participation and the form that participation takes.
- ▶ Giving **children of all ages and backgrounds, including the most vulnerable**, the opportunity to be involved – by building on existing activities and structures to develop a range of initiatives and appropriate support means (financial and otherwise) enabling children's engagement in CRC reporting.
- ▶ Establishing a process at national and local level that is **child-centric and built around the needs and interests of children**, including a comprehensive child protection policy which underpins every aspect of children's engagement.
- ▶ Promoting **understanding of the entire CRC reporting process** – at local, provincial, national and international levels – both before and after the publication of the Committee's concluding observations – to reflect the true nature of human rights monitoring, enhance children's aspirations and to maximise opportunities for children to advocate for change.
- ▶ **Planning for sustainability** to ensure that children's involvement in the reporting process has the biggest possible impact and supports long-term change for children at national, local and personal levels. This is also about mainstreaming children's participation and engagement – through mandatory mechanisms so that CRC monitoring is not only reduced to a series of one-off actions.

Being well aware of the CRC reporting process

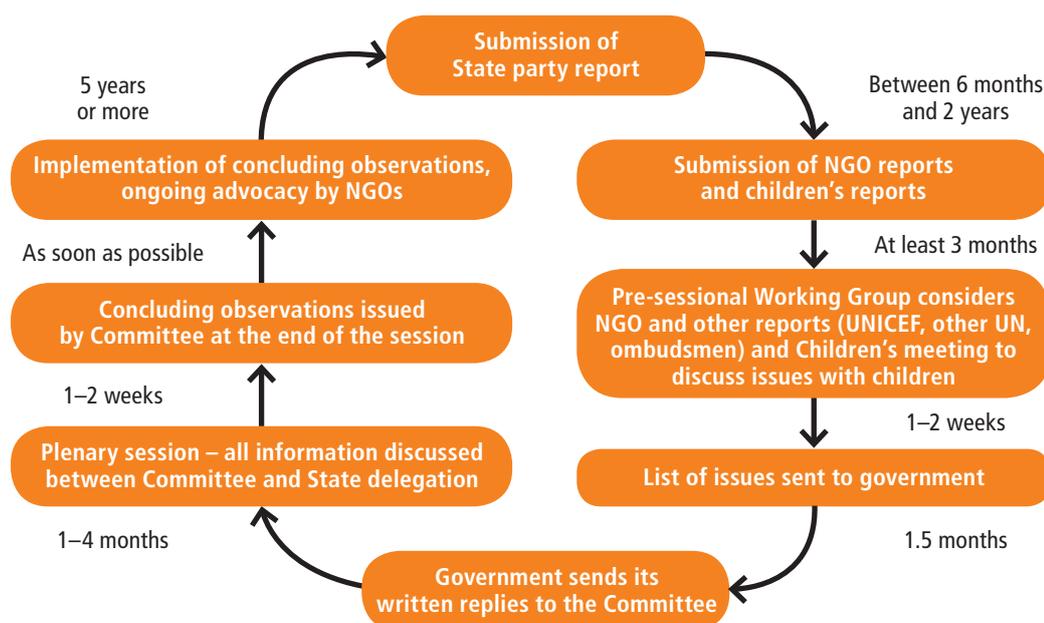
The Committee on the Rights of the Child meets three times each year, for four weeks at a time, to examine how well States that are party to the Convention on the Rights of the Child are implementing the treaty. Two years after initial ratification, and every five years thereafter, a State party must submit a detailed report – called the “**State party report**” – outlining the measures it has taken to implement the CRC and, how effective these measures have been. “Alternative reports” on the government's progress are also welcomed from NGOs working on child rights, United Nations agencies, ombudsmen and children. Following the submission of reports, the Committee convenes a meeting, inviting NGOs,

United Nations agencies, ombudsmen and children to attend a confidential pre-sessional working group (**pre-session**) to discuss their concerns in more detail. A separate children’s meeting may also be convened on request to the Committee Secretariat via the NGO Group for the CRC (the NGO Group). After the pre-session, the Committee sends the State party a “**list of issues**” on which it requires further information. This information must be submitted by the government in writing (**written responses**) prior to the State party examination. These meetings take place in the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in Palais Wilson in Geneva.

Three or six months after the pre-session, the Committee convenes the State party examination (NGOs and children may be present to observe). The State party is questioned about its implementation of the CRC. At the end of each of the Committee’s three-week sessions, the Committee issues **concluding observations** in relation to all the State party examinations it has conducted. By ratifying the CRC, a State party undertakes to implement the recommendations contained in the Committee’s concluding observations.

A similar process exists for the examination of State party reports under the Optional Protocol of the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (OPSC) and the Optional Protocol of the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflicts (OPAC). While children are increasingly preparing their own reports on the CRC, they still rarely prepare reports on the two **Optional Protocols (OPs)**, and their views have until now been incorporated in the main NGO reports. Children should be encouraged to express their views, give opinions and formulate recommendations about how the OPs are being implemented at national level, but due to the sensitive nature of the issues addressed in the OPs, protection, methodological and ethical considerations should be especially developed.

Reporting process of the Committee on the Rights of the Child





TIP: Traditionally, the State party examination takes place three months after the pre-session. But for States and written replies that have to be translated into the working language of the Committee, the State party examination may now take place 6 months later instead. Make sure you clarify with the NGO Group or the CRC Secretariat when your country's examination is planned because three months can make a huge difference for children – in terms of time perception, planning and expectations of their continued involvement after the pre-session.

For more detailed information about each aspect of the CRC reporting process, see the NGO Group's *Guide for NGOs reporting to the Committee on the Rights of the Child* in various editions and languages. Concerning more specifically the procedures for the examination of the implementation of the Optional Protocols, see *Reporting on the OPSC and OPAC*.³

NGOs have used many different models and methodologies for involving children in the CRC reporting process, dependent on the context in which they are working, their own working methods, and the particular needs of children. Ideally, children's views should be taken into account both in the State party report (NGOs can encourage the State to involve children) and in the NGO reports to the Committee.

Addressing barriers to children's involvement

Engaging children in the reporting process can give increased depth and resonance to NGOs' national advocacy and campaign on children's rights. However, supporting children's engagement in CRC reporting – to whatever extent and in whichever way – has very real time and resource implications and as such it is essential that an NGO understands the barriers children may face when engaging in such work. Achieving sustainable funding and engagement, particularly when managing children's expectations of their involvement, and ensuring children have ongoing support to undertake their own activism – is key. Many NGOs report that they did not realise how much time and know-how children's engagement would take.



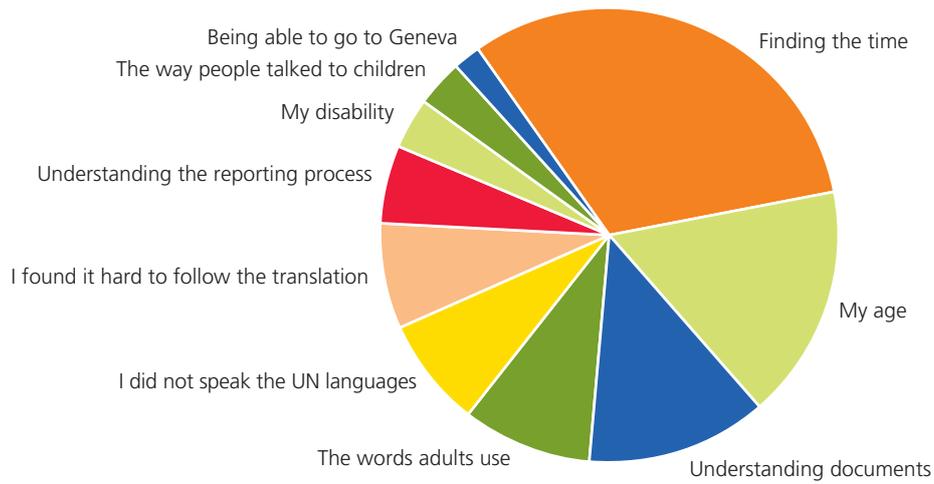
TIP: Promoting and ensuring child participation can be a time consuming process, so you should allocate specific staff with experience in child participation to run this process in a time efficient and child sensitive manner.

NGOs have emphasised the value of both engaging children at the earliest possible stage and developing activities in partnership with them in order to take into account the different elements in children's lives that can limit their involvement in advocacy. In research carried out by the NGO Group, children were asked about the barriers they faced when engaging in CRC reporting.⁴ A significant majority reported that they found it hard to find the time to become, or stay, involved in children's rights monitoring and advocacy on account of responsibilities relating to school, family or employment. Others said their age and ability to understand documents often made it difficult for them to participate fully.

³ Both guides are available on www.childrightsnet.org

⁴ NGO Group for the CRC (2009), *Maximising children's engagement in the reporting process for the Convention on the Rights of the Child*.

Barriers identified by children



With this in mind it is crucial that NGOs factor in every aspect of the reporting process, including activities and advocacy at national level in their planning. NGOs must be clear about what they want to achieve such as:

- ▶ internationally: influencing the concluding observations,
- ▶ nationally: utilising the concluding observations and drawing attention to children's rights violations,
- ▶ personally: the development of individual children.

NGOs must also work to identify funding sources that can support the achievement of these different aims both in the short and in the long-term.

2. Preparation

Activities to engage children in the reporting process

Children from several countries have contributed their views to State party and NGO alternative reports. They have submitted their own evidence to the Committee and attended meetings at the Committee's headquarters in Geneva. Children are also taking action at national level on the Committee's concluding observations. These undertakings have often been accompanied by a wide range of activities, with children at local and provincial levels, led by children and supported by NGOs.

NGOs already working in the children's rights field will usually have a range of established activities that are run by, with or for children, aimed at promoting or furthering children's rights. These can often be used as the foundation for activities to involve children in the CRC reporting process. As one NGO colleague put it: "the process is organic and should draw on broader efforts to ensure CRC realization". Examples of activities that NGOs have undertaken or built upon to support and enhance children's involvement in the reporting process include:

- ▶ Supporting children to learn about their human rights through training and outreach activity, including by producing with them on- and off-line materials about children's rights, advocacy and campaigning
- ▶ Facilitating meetings and consultations for children at local and national levels
- ▶ Supporting children to gather evidence on children's rights or compare the State party and NGO reports and highlight issues that have not been addressed and produce a children's report for various audiences, from local authorities to the CRC Committee itself
- ▶ Accompanying children in direct reporting and monitoring, from the pre-session and/or a children's meeting with the Committee to observing the State party examination in Geneva
- ▶ Facilitating a visit by a Country Rapporteur (the lead Committee member for each State party examination) focused on interactions with children
- ▶ Channelling children's contributions to the Committee's Days of General Discussion⁵ or the drafting of CRC General Comments⁶
- ▶ Taking action on the Committee's recommendations – through dissemination, meetings with government officials, and child-led campaigns
- ▶ Engaging with the media to promote and debate children's rights.

It is however essential to consider carefully the country context before planning activities, so as to anticipate difficulties and risks that they may entail. **Appendix 3 contains a**

⁵ To find out more about the Committee's Days of General Discussion, visit: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/discussion2011.htm>

⁶ To read already adopted General Comments, visit: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/comments.htm> and to find out about up-coming ones, contact the NGO Group for the CRC.

template risk assessment for some aspects of a children's rights research project. You may use it as a model to list, discuss and assess risks and obstacles for each activity and related steps that you envisage or that children are proposing.

To address grave violations, you may consider using existing material (complaints, ombudsmen or human rights NGO reports, child helplines data, etc.). Rather than engaging children in collecting or giving new individual testimonies, children other than the victims may be invited to reflect upon such material. However, peer consultations or child-led surveys sometimes allow finding out about facts and/or perceptions that adult-led research would not reflect. So, helping children to address sensitive issues should not be avoided, but should be very carefully planned and accompanied.

In addition, you should reflect on how to adapt the planned activities to enable very young children, children with special needs, or children living in special conditions (street, institution, detention, on the move, etc) to also potentially benefit from them. Sometimes, proposing broader CRC awareness-raising or creative activities is better, easier or more acceptable (eg. by prison administration) than direct work on CRC reporting, but can ultimately nurture a children's report, while guaranteeing the necessary level of protection, anonymity, or age-appropriateness.



TIP: As a general principle, NGOs may wish to consider supporting children financially to participate in preparatory meetings and other activities at national level, whether this is through paying for travel and accommodation, paying for parents or carers to accompany children to meetings, or through subsidising lost wages for working children.

CASE STUDY

The Get ready for Geneva project, England

Choosing a delegation to meet with the Committee

Children managing the Get ready for Geneva project ran a competition called *Get yourself to Geneva*. To enter, children had to be under 18 and living in England. They were asked what Article 12 (the right to have a say) meant to them – by writing a newspaper story, essay, letter or diary entry; sending in a podcast or short film; composing a song; drawing a comic strip; or sending in a photograph or drawing – with a caption – that showed Article 12 in practice. They also had to finish a sentence starting '*I want to visit the UN Committee so that I can...!*'. The entries were judged by children and by the Get ready project team. 12 children aged 9 to 17 were chosen. Extra money was given by other charities to support another 2 children to go to the Government examination in Geneva 3 months later and report back to children in England.

Meeting with the Committee

12 children from England met with the Committee in 2008. 10 of these children met with the Committee in a children-only meeting (see below), but 2 took part in the pre-session as part of the NGO delegation. To prepare, these children took part in a weekend residential in England with 10 adult members of the delegation. They learned more about the child rights issues that affect children in England (based on the findings of research carried out with over 1,700 children) and received training in public speaking. At the pre-session Nathan (age 12) and Imogen (age 17) gave presentations and answered the Committee's questions. One adult helped to explain difficult terms and what different laws and policies meant when they were referred to by the Committee or by NGOs.

Sending out the concluding observations

The Committee's concluding observations for the UK Government were published on 3 October 2008. On the same day, the Children's Rights Alliance for England wrote a version of the concluding

observations for children, so that all the children involved in the CRC reporting process could see the impact of their views. They were able to see that the 14 recommendations they had made to the Committee had been included in its final concluding observations. The children’s version of the concluding observations was sent out by e-mail and post to children, NGOs, local councils, schools, the government, and the Children’s Commissioner, and was also posted online on the Get ready for Geneva website. Children have continued to work to monitor the government’s progress towards putting the concluding observations into practice, especially in relation to the recommendations children made about their rights. It has published these reports on the Get ready website.

Children’s Rights Alliance for England (CRAE)

Establishing partnerships

Involving other organizations and individuals in work related to engaging children in the CRC reporting process can contribute significantly to the impact of the work, both in the short and the long-term. Key stakeholders to engage with include other children, schools, youth groups, child-led organizations, NGOs, faith organizations, local and national broadcast and print media, local authorities, parents and carers, children’s ombudsmen, parliamentarians, political parties and of course the State party. These links will also build a strong foundation that can be used to lobby for State action on the Committee’s concluding observations.

In particular, you should consult with your **national child rights coalition**, if relevant, or develop the child reporting component of your work under its umbrella and possibly together with other member organizations that may have complementary skills and resources to contribute to your initiative.

You should also consider consulting with your national **UNICEF** country office or national committee early in the process to check whether it has an interest in child reporting, has its own plans to support such a process, or would be willing to either participate in or support your initiative technically or financially. Similarly, you should check the interest and potential support of **international NGOs** present in the country. Several ones have a strong interest in child participation. Human rights or children’s **ombudsmen** are the other obvious potential partners worth contacting as a priority.

Achieving a “legacy” of children’s engagement in CRC monitoring is challenging and part of a much broader process of mainstreaming and integrating children’s participation at different levels. However, building strong relationships with key national stakeholders has proven immensely valuable to many NGOs in securing funding for follow-up activities to the formal CRC reporting process. For others, establishing links at local and provincial levels has been a very effective vehicle for achieving tangible change in children’s lives, and engaging children in human rights monitoring, on an ongoing basis.



TIP: Depending on how independence from the State can be guaranteed and perceived, you may ask government counterparts to also provide support for child reporting – based on CRC General Comment 5.⁷

⁷ General Comment No. 5 (2003): General Measures of Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, see: <http://daccess-ods.un.org/access.nsf/Get?Open&DS=CRC/GC/2003/5&Lang=E>

Supporting children's personal development

To ensure that children have the skills they need to meaningfully engage in the CRC reporting process – and most importantly, to get the most out of their involvement – NGOs will need to provide information and training on children's rights monitoring, again building on what had been achieved already rather than starting from scratch. It can be useful for NGOs to focus on children's personal development by supporting them to develop skills in areas such as public speaking, research, analysis, report writing and evaluation.

Many NGOs have found it useful to develop or adapt specific tools to enable children's involvement in monitoring, reporting and advocacy, such as:

- ▶ Child-friendly information on the CRC⁸ and the reporting process
- ▶ Versions of relevant documents, such as the concluding observations, adapted or explained to children.
- ▶ Information written for children about the law affecting children's rights in their country
- ▶ Regular meetings to give children the opportunity to identify and discuss children's rights issues
- ▶ Research tools for use by children
- ▶ Training and materials to help children develop campaigning skills
- ▶ Use of theatre and video production to explore children's rights issues
- ▶ Building the capacity of partner/ member NGOs to support children's self advocacy.

NGOs will need to consider how to make available additional support – through dedicated materials, staff and the involvement of parents and carers – to enable younger children and children with particular needs to participate fully in the whole range of activities related to the CRC reporting process.

Cartoons for Children's Rights is a UNICEF broadcast initiative that has developed more than 80 half-minute public service announcements based on the articles of the CRC: http://www.unicef.org/videoaudio/video_top_cartoons.html



Freedom from Discrimination (Article 20)

Philippines (Imagine Asia).



Family (Article 5):

Argentina (Independent).



Identity (Article 8)

Iran (Independent).



Education (Article 28)

India (Toonz Animation).



Protection in War (Article 38)

India (USL-RM)



Protection from Neglect (Article 19)

Czech Republic (Kratky Film)



Freedom from Discrimination (Article 2)

Barbados (Independent).



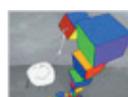
Freedom from Child Labour (Article 32)

Italy (RAI Television).



A Protective Environment (Articles 3, 9)

Scotland (Red Kite Productions Ltd).



Self Expression (Article 13)

Chile (CINEANIMADORES).

⁸ See: MAGIC website, including CRC child-friendly version in numerous languages <http://www.unicef.org/magic/briefing/uncorc.html>

Supporting children to gather evidence

Children are increasingly gathering the experiences of their peers to present to the Committee as a way of sharing children's views on the state of children's rights in their country. Indeed, evidence collected by children themselves have a special meaning and importance for the Committee. Some of the research projects children have undertaken have incorporated the views of thousands of children. Others have been smaller, focusing on the views of particular groups of children or the experiences of children living in particular settings. Some NGOs have trained children in social research and investigative skills, and supported them to carry out the research themselves.⁹

As a general rule, children should be involved in designing the research projects, developing the questions, carrying out the research, and undertaking the analysis. Adults can also play their part where children's involvement may be difficult, inappropriate, impractical or simply too time-consuming. In some situations, child-led research can lead to backlash from parents and carers who see it as a threat, so accompanying adults should help children handle such reactions. In other situations, child researchers felt they gained increased respect from peers and adults from the process. This was especially the case when child researchers were younger or perceived as more vulnerable (eg. living in care) than the children they interviewed. When asked about their experiences of the CRC reporting process, children said they considered these data-gathering exercises instrumental in enabling them to get their voices heard and taken seriously.¹⁰

Children have used a range of methods to gather the views and experiences of their peers:

- ▶ Undertaking **surveys and questionnaires** with children at events, through schools and youth settings, and online, in order to collect a wide cross-section of views and experiences.
- ▶ Undertaking targeted research through **focus group interviews**, with marginalised groups of children (in some cases, children previously identified by the NGO or the Committee on the Rights of the Child as likely to face violations of their rights), to talk in detail about their rights and what needs to change.
- ▶ **One-to-one interviews** with vulnerable children, for example children in custody, children in mental health settings, or children who have experienced abuse.
- ▶ **Discussion days and consultation events**, bringing together large groups of children from different ages and backgrounds.
- ▶ Launching a **national call for evidence** to obtain case studies from children about how far they feel their rights are respected.
- ▶ Undertaking a **literature review** to determine where children's views are already being represented, and where children have not had the opportunity to share their experiences.
- ▶ Making or collecting **videos, photos, drawings** through competitions, workshops, partnerships with artists.

All of these different methods should be grounded in ethical research methods – for example, reviewing research questions with supportive professionals to ensure they

⁹ See: *So You Want to Involve Children in Research*, A toolkit supporting children's meaningful and ethical participation in research relating to violence against children, International Save the Children Alliance, 2004. http://www.savethechildren.net/alliance/resources/So_you_want_to_research_apr2004.pdf

¹⁰ *Maximising children's engagement in the reporting process for the Convention on the Rights of the Child*, NGO Group for the CRC, 2009.

are appropriate and relevant, and will not have a disproportionate emotional impact on young participants; ensuring all children (and parents or carers where appropriate) have consented to being involved in the research and have been provided with all the necessary information; ensuring children know what will be done with their views; ensuring individual children cannot be identified through the research; providing assistance to ensure that children can express their views freely (through using private meeting spaces, interpreters, signers, and other methods as required by children); and ensuring that all children have the opportunity to contribute their views and experiences should they wish to do so.



TIP: Ensure that adequate funding is available for data gathering exercises – for example, for training to be provided for peer researchers, for travel to allow children to take part, for the translation of materials into the different national languages, for the hiring of venues if required, and for any specific materials that may need to be developed to engage children with special needs.

See **Appendix 1** for an example of an ethics statement governing research with children.

See **Appendix 2** for examples of surveys used by NGOs to gather children’s views on their rights.

See **Appendix 3** for a template risk assessment for a children’s rights research project

CASE STUDY

Gathering evidence on children’s rights, Scotland

Article 12 in Scotland is a youth-led network of organizations that work to promote children’s participation and information rights as set out in international human rights law. In 2008, Article 12 in Scotland published *I Witness: The UNCRC in Scotland*, the aim of which was to highlight – and present solutions to – the emerging issues relating to the implementation of the CRC from a child’s point of view. To develop the report, Article 12 in Scotland consulted widely, over a two-year period, with partner organizations and others representing a range of geographical areas and social groups, to find out how children viewed their rights and well-being. Key themes were identified that represented the most common issues, concerns and solutions. These included discrimination against children from gypsy and traveller communities, discrimination against new immigrants to Scotland, limited opportunities for children to participate in decision-making, the treatment of refugee and asylum-seeking children, children’s relationships with their families, access to focused health services for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender young people, support for those with eating disorders; awareness of the CRC; and negative attitudes towards children in care. The data gained from the consultations illustrated the views and opinions of over 8,000 children and young people in Scotland from the age of four.

Article 12 in Scotland

3. Submission of a children's report

*Children's views were included in the NGO report but [children] did not think this was enough.*¹¹

When the NGO Group asked children why they had become involved in the CRC reporting process, children said they wanted the opportunity to tell the Committee about children's rights in their countries, in their own way and their own words. In several countries, children have used the evidence they gathered from their peers to write their own reports for the Committee, reports which are considered alongside those from the State party, UNICEF, NGOs and others.

Children's reports

There are no hard and fast rules about what information children should include in their submissions to the Committee or what those submissions should look like. Written reports should not be longer than 30 pages¹² (reflecting the restrictions imposed on NGOs), but children should be encouraged to be as creative as possible in the way in which they decide to present their evidence to the Committee.

NGO reports usually contain a section-by-section analysis of the State party report based on the following eight clusters of articles to enable the Committee to compare the government report with the NGO information:

1. general measures of implementation (Articles 4, 42, 44.6)
2. definition of the child (Article 1)
3. general principles (Articles 2, 3, 6, 12)
4. civil rights and freedoms (Articles 7, 8, 13-17, 28.2, 37(a) and 39)
5. family environment and alternative care (Articles 5, 9-11, 18.1-2, 19-21, 25, 27.4 and 39)
6. disability, basic health and welfare (Articles 6, 18.3, 23, 24, 26, 27.1-3, and 33)
7. education, leisure and cultural activities (Articles 28-31)
8. special protection measures (Articles 22, 30, 32-36, 37(b)-(d), 38, 39 and 40)

Children can be given information about these clusters, as a basis for discussion on whether they have information under each one, which ones they consider as a priority, whether they would prefer to **select just a few or do a thematic report**, rather than a comprehensive one. Children can also decide to cover all clusters but only as they pertain to a specific category of children (e.g. disabled, indigenous, minority, asylum-seekers, working children, etc.). It is essential to ensure children do shape their own agenda – quite

¹¹ *Maximising children's engagement in the reporting process for the Convention on the Rights of the Child*. NGO Group for the CRC, 2009.

¹² Children can of course prepare a longer report for national level and send a summary of 30 pages with their main findings to the Committee.

often, particularly when supported by an NGO, children’s reports mirror the NGO agendas and priorities and are not necessarily tackling the issues that they think affect them most. So, the starting point for consultation should be their own rights and how they perceive them being fulfilled, or not.

In **Cambodia children’s report “My life... My suggestions...”**, CYMCR, October 2010, children’s groups in Cambodia decided to select several of the above clusters, but also added child participation as a chapter in itself, and focused on their priorities under each cluster.¹³

The 2010 Belgian children’s report: This was a comprehensive report, but children’s voices were brought into the Committee room by a 12 minute video during the pre-session which focused on 4 particularly vulnerable groups of children.¹⁴



To view **other reports submitted by children to the Committee**, search: <http://www.crin.org/docs/resources/treaties/crc.25/annex-vi-crin.shtml>

For practical advice to support children in writing their reports, see **Appendix 4** for Tips for children on writing a children’s rights report and My Pocket Guide to CRC reporting.

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CASE STUDY

Writing a report for the Committee, Netherlands

The Dutch National Youth Council is a member of the Dutch Coalition on Children’s Rights. The Youth Council was involved in the process of preparing the NGO report to the Committee and it was also responsible for the separate children/youth report. In consultation with a broad range of organizations working on children’s rights the issues that were to be included in the NGO report were determined, and guidelines for reporting to the Committee shared. Following this, the Youth Council prepared a proposal for writing the youth report, including information about the groups of children that would be involved and the different issues that the report might cover. Once the proposal was evaluated and agreed by the Dutch Coalition on Children’s Rights work by the Youth Council began: appointing young writers, contacting different youth groups, setting up and undertaking interviews, and formulating conclusions. There were always two contact people at the Youth Council – one representing the Youth Council at the Dutch Coalition on Children’s Rights and another responsible for the youth report. The Dutch Coalition on Children’s Rights supported children to write the report by providing information on the CRC or on the Dutch legal system, but did not interfere in the writing process or with the content of the report. The children from the Youth Council benefited from the support, experience and knowledge of adults from the Coalition. Their involvement was based on their independence from and equality with, the Coalition. One partner represented the children and the other, the adult society.

Defence for Children – ECPAT Nederland

¹³ See the full report: http://www.crin.org/docs/Cambodia%20%5BChildren’s%20Report%5D_My%20Life...My%20Suggestions_CCYMCR.pdf

¹⁴ See: <http://www.unicef.be/fr/project-belgium/what-do-you-think> and http://www.unicef.be/_webdata/WDYT_UK_def.pdf

CASE STUDY

Writing a report for the Committee, England

The Get ready for Geneva project supported children between the ages of six and eighteen to gather evidence in a nationwide, children's rights investigation with over 1,700 of their peers in 2007. There were 1,362 completed online surveys and 3,000 pages of transcripts from focus group interviews. Children leading the Get ready project received training and analysed the findings from the surveys. They used quotes from the focus group interviews to back up the findings in their report. Fourteen children volunteered to sit on a drafting committee. They were each responsible for writing different sections of the report – which contained chapters on respect and freedom, friends and family, health and safety, education, play and leisure, and crime – based on the analysis already done by their peers. They chose to illustrate the report with photographs taken throughout the course of the project and with drawings done by younger children to demonstrate their human rights concerns. The drafting committee met briefly before the submission of the report to the Committee to agree on the design of the report and to formulate their own recommendations – 14 things that they wanted the Committee to include in its concluding observations for the UK Government. A fuller version of the research findings was published in a later report written by CRAE staff and overseen by children – What do they know? The human rights concerns of children and young people in England.

Children's Rights Alliance for England

Practical matters relating to the report

Reports from children are expected to be submitted in accordance with the deadlines relating to NGO alternative reports – usually 3 months before the pre-session takes place. NGOs should contact the NGO Group directly to clarify deadline dates for the submission of reports.

- ▶ **Reports from children should be sent to the NGO Group by e-mail.**
- ▶ **25 hard copies should also be sent to the NGO Group for distribution to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. If this is not possible, the NGO Group can make photocopies of the reports for you.**

The NGO Group can also provide advice and information about the development of children's reports.

NGOs should also encourage and support children to disseminate their reports in their own country. Examples of activities include launch events; distributing press releases to the media; and meeting with government officials, parliamentarians and other key stakeholders including the children's ombudsperson, NGOs, child-led organizations, and local authorities. Children should be encouraged to ensure that all the children that participated in the report, by contributing views, writing the report, or in some other capacity, receive a copy of the final submission in a form that is accessible to them.

4. Presenting children's views to the Committee

It can be fully legitimate and sometimes preferable for relevant adults to present children's reports or views to the Committee. It can also be sufficient to send children's reports and key recommendations without having to present them in person in Geneva (some international NGOs systematically submit written information to the Committee's attention, but do not take part in pre-sessions). However, as there is growing interest and practice in children's direct representation in the CRC reporting process, this section focuses on how to select, prepare and support children willing to come before the Committee.

Children's delegations

Meeting with the Committee 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 week and/or attend the pre-session working group (as observers or as participants). Children may also come to attend the State party examination as observers.

There is no standard approach to the size and composition of child delegations to Geneva for the children's meeting, and no expectations from the Committee. However, it is important to work with children to consider what form of delegation is likely to have the biggest impact on the Committee, having in mind the limited time available for the meeting and child protection standards that should apply. You should for instance take into account issues such as age, gender balance, ethnicity and background (for example, including indigenous, minority, disabled or vulnerable groups) to ensure as representative a delegation as possible, while keeping the delegation quite small to enable effective preparation, protection and participation.

Four of the children [that attended the pre-session] were from the war affected regions of [the country]...and another that attended...was a former child prostitute who was then undergoing rehabilitation while another had survived being trafficked. These children were able to share their issues [and] views with the Committee members.¹⁵

Due to time constraints, the pre-session and children's meetings are never extended beyond three hours and one hour respectively. It is therefore important to take this into account when deciding how many children should come to Geneva. Large delegations of children have sometimes felt frustrated by the time constraints. Managing children's expectations of meetings with the Committee is fundamentally important. Meetings in Geneva should be emphasised as part of a wider process with the ultimate aim of improving the implementation of children's rights in each country.¹⁶ Preparatory children's meeting should also be ensured whenever possible, based on past global experiences.¹⁷

¹⁵ *Maximising children's engagement in the reporting process for the Convention on the Rights of the Child*, NGO Group for the CRC, 2009.

¹⁶ Children can meet children in other ways, such as during a rapporteur visit (see the relevant section in these guidelines).

¹⁷ See: *So You Want to Consult with Children?*, and *12 Lessons Learned from Children's Participation in the UN General Assembly Special session on Children*, International Save the Children Alliance, 2003/2004. <http://www.savethechildren.net/alliance/resources/publications.html#participation>

NGOs should be aware that it is useful to make the Committee Secretariat aware in advance – via the NGO Group – of the size and needs of the delegation, particularly if the delegation includes children with particular needs including special equipment, interpreters or access requirements. This will ensure all children are able to participate fully in their meeting with the Committee.

There are many different approaches that NGOs and children can take in selecting delegations to travel to Geneva. Some of these have included:

- ▶ Child-led organizations voting for the children that will represent them in Geneva
- ▶ Running a competition asking children to “apply” for a place on the delegation, with winning entries chosen by children or NGOs
- ▶ Children approached on the basis of other children’s and NGOs’ knowledge of their direct experience of issues to be raised or their child rights advocacy experience.

It has usually been the case that the overriding criterion for participating in a children’s delegation is their active role in preparing the children’s report and/or active engagement in promoting or implementing children’s rights. This is intended by many NGOs to signpost the legitimacy of children’s participation in the reporting process based on their status as children and as individual and collective rights-holders. Children who meet with the Committee should talk about the broader issues in their report/country and not focus on providing testimonies about their personal circumstances.

Members of a children’s delegation should be under the age of 18 (there may be some exception if a child just turned 18 between taking part in the reporting process and the pre-session). They should also be able to present the report and uses which they think are a priority in their country and to answer questions from the Committee.



TIP: The Committee does not provide individual assistance to children. It is therefore essential that children understand that the Committee will not be able to intervene and directly improve their lives as a result of the meeting. A trained adult should prepare children mentally and emotionally as to what to expect, and avoid involving children who are too vulnerable due to their personal situation.

Once a children’s delegation has been selected, it is important to support their visit to Geneva. Such support should include:

- ▶ Enabling children to get to know other members of the delegation prior to travelling to Geneva.
- ▶ Providing a briefing (and an itinerary for children to take away) about what will happen in Geneva, what to expect, and what their roles will be.
- ▶ Establishing whether children will be participating in the pre-sessional working group, a children’s meeting, or both – and familiarising them with the likely set-up of each meeting.
- ▶ Ensuring children feel comfortable with the adults that will be accompanying them to Geneva, and that these adults are well briefed or trained.

CASE STUDY

Selecting a delegation to meet with the Committee, Hong Kong

It was important to ensure that children had the opportunity to speak directly with the Committee to provide first-hand information and observations from their unique perspective. To enable children to contribute meaningfully, it was important that they took part in the CRC reporting process from the very beginning. The Hong Kong Committee on Children's Rights obtained sufficient funding to support two child delegates to travel to Geneva to meet with the Committee during the pre-session. To ensure that the process was genuinely participatory, the children that prepared the children's report for the Committee were supported to select their own representatives. They met to discuss and decide the rules for election and the criteria for selecting their own delegates. Concerns on gender, age, equal opportunities, commitment and the language barrier were all discussed by children. A ballot paper was designed that took these concerns into account, and the NGO distributed these to all eligible young voters. A 15 year-old boy and a 19 year-old girl were chosen to represent children from Hong Kong in Geneva. The delegates actively participated in all events relating to the reporting process both in Hong Kong and Geneva, including press conferences, the pre-session working group, and a children's meeting following the pre-session. Giving children the opportunity to select their own representatives gave them a mandate from their peers to share children's views and experiences with the Committee. One of the child delegates, now an adult, continues to support children to engage in the CRC reporting process.

Hong Kong Committee on Children's Rights

- ▶ Providing training for children – for example, in public speaking or media interviewing,¹⁸ to ensure they are prepared not only for meeting the Committee but also for any related activities at national level to promote the findings from their report.
- ▶ Managing children's expectations about what is likely to be achieved during the meeting itself.
- ▶ Ensuring parents and carers are well informed about the activities children will be involved in while in Geneva, and are familiar with the adults accompanying children to Geneva.
- ▶ Having a child protection framework in place, with well defined procedures, roles and responsibilities.



TIP: Children can find the whole process to be an intimidating experience – scheduling an extra day in Geneva to allow children to settle in, familiarise themselves with the city, recover from jetlag and prepare together for their meeting with the Committee can be useful.

See **Appendix 5** for a programme from a residential weekend preparing children to meet with the Committee in Geneva.

Logistics and safety considerations for a children's delegation visit

The following will need to be considered when planning the logistics of your delegation's visit to Geneva:

¹⁸ NGOs should follow existing guidance for interviewing children to ensure that the individual child and his/her peers and family are not put at risk. For more information about existing guidelines, contact the NGO Group.

| ITEM | DETAILS | STATUS |
|--|--|--------|
| Have you budgeted adequately for costs relating to the delegation visit? | • transport, including transfer | |
| | • passports / visas | |
| | • cost of travel to obtain passports / visas | |
| | • travel and health insurance | |
| | • immunisation (if relevant) | |
| | • accommodation and a per diem for each child participant and support worker | |
| Have you anticipated additional costs that may be incurred as a result of the individual needs of delegation members such as? | • language support | |
| | • a support worker for a participant with disabilities | |
| | • replacement wages for a working child (if appropriate) | |
| | • toiletry kits or appropriate clothing (i.e. warm clothes) for children who do not possess these | |
| If delegation members need to obtain passports or visas to travel to Geneva, have you factored in the time needed to obtain these? | • necessary parental/guardian authorization and documents for all | |
| | • time to submit request and collect passport | |
| | • request for invitation letter for visa from the NGO Group | |
| | • time to submit request and collect visa | |
| Have you adequately informed and involved parents, carers and children themselves in decision-making and preparation? | • consent to travel from parents or carers and children themselves for every delegation member (including if not needing a visa). | |
| | • itinerary for parents and carers, along with emergency contact details | |
| | • ways to enable children to contact their parents or carers while in Geneva (phone, e-mail, collective/ individual) | |
| | • identification and preparation of accompanying adults ("chaperons") | |
| Do you have an appropriate child protection policy in place, and a risk assessment to cover the visit to Geneva? | • advance information on protection policy to participants and their guardians | |
| | • written plan/guidance/contacts details to all delegations members for any issues that may arise | |
| | • adequate number of staff in the event of an emergency | |
| | • psychological support planned for children if they have shared difficult or sensitive issues with the Committee | |
| | • staff training to deal with these issues | |
| | | |
| Are you aware of all relevant support needs of delegation members and how to meet these needs during the delegation visit? | • linguistic | |
| | • dietary | |
| | • religious | |
| | • health | |
| | • related requests made to NGO Group/ CRC secretariat(i.e. access to building for wheel-chair, native language interpreters, prayer space) | |
| Have you pre-arranged accommodation and meals for the delegation while in Geneva? | • accommodation (with breakfast ? in shared or single rooms ? in agreement with participants' wishes ?) | |
| | • lunches | |
| | • snacks | |
| | • dinners | |



TIP: The UN Committee only has access to English, French and Spanish interpretation during the pre-sessional working group, although translation into the other three UN languages (Arabic, Chinese and Russian) may be provided upon request. Interpretation services are not provided for the children's meeting; interpreters must be provided by NGOs, or the NGO Group may help. Contact the NGO Group well in advance.

The NGO Group provides a practical Handbook for all NGOs attending a Committee session containing practical information about transport in Geneva, accommodation, and the local area. It is a useful basis for preparing materials to advise children on what to expect in Geneva, including details on the climate, the currency, and the standard of living. It can be obtained by contacting the NGO Group and is sent routinely to all NGOs travelling to Geneva to participate in meetings with the Committee. You should consider translating and/or adapting it to your specific children's delegation.

Briefings

Prior to the pre-session meetings, the NGO Group holds a briefing for NGOs in the Palais Wilson, which children should attend. This briefing includes information about how the pre-session will work and the etiquette once in the meeting.

On request, the NGO Group can also provide briefings for the children's delegation and accompanying adults, which will aim to familiarise children with the Palais Wilson, go over rules and regulations, explain the way in which the meetings will work, and give children the opportunity to ask any questions. Should time and scheduling allow, children may be shown the room in which the meeting will take place.

The pre-sessional working group

The pre-session is a technical meeting to assist the Committee in drafting the list of issues to ask the State that will be examined. It is not especially child friendly. It is also usually a small meeting due to its format and confidential nature. Generally, no more than twelve participants attend the pre-session, in addition to Committee and CRC Secretariat members. Consult with the NGO Group who you want to send to the pre-session before making any arrangements. When you are sending a list of NGO representatives who wish to attend the pre-session to the NGO Group, please include the names and addresses of children if they should attend. Addresses can be c/o your NGO.

Participants usually include national, and sometimes international, NGOs and inter-governmental bodies, such as UNICEF or other UN agencies, and national human rights institutions such as children's ombudspersons, that have submitted reports. Observing the pre-session can give children a better understanding of the CRC reporting process and the way in which the Committee formulates its concluding observations – leading to more meaningful engagement. When determining the composition of delegations for the pre-sessional working groups, NGOs should not neglect to consider the expertise of child-led organizations, especially where issues such as child labour or the involvement of children in armed conflict are being discussed.

Following an introduction by the Chair, NGOs and other non-governmental bodies, will be asked to give short formal presentations covering progress made towards the implementation of the CRC by the government, and outlining their main issues of concern. Committee members will then ask questions based on the presentations and

their reading of the State party, NGO, UN agencies and other reports. Having noted these down, the participants will be given a short break to decide how to answer the questions. Participants will begin to answer the Committee's questions but may be interrupted for further clarification. Discussions continue in this way for the duration of the working group. (More detail on the procedures in the pre-session working group can be found in the NGO Group's *Guide for NGOs reporting to the Committee on the Rights of the Child*.) Children may also speak during the NGO presentation time and provide answers to the Committee's questions if they wish to do so.

CASE STUDY

Taking part in the pre-session, United Kingdom

During the UK pre-session in 2008, children from England, Scotland and Wales formed part of the NGO delegation to the Committee. It was important to NGOs to give up places on their delegations to children, so that their voices could be heard as part of the formal reporting process, as well as through a children's meeting with the Committee (which took place later in the day with a larger delegation of children). The youngest child taking part in the formal UK NGO delegation was 12 years-old. Children prepared for their participation in the pre-session prior to travelling to Geneva, through separate weekend residencies with other delegation members in their own countries. This included writing their presentations and familiarising themselves with the issues raised by children in their reports to the Committee. The delegation members also all came together in Geneva the night before the pre-session to give them the opportunity to get to know one another. During the pre-session, children gave presentations about the key children's rights issues in the UK, and answered questions from the Committee alongside NGO representatives and the Children's Commissioners. An adult supported children throughout the meeting by explaining the context of different legislation and policy being discussed; she was also on hand to answer any questions or deal with any concerns that they had during the course of the meeting. Following the pre-session, children said that although the discussions had been challenging to follow at times, it was important for them to be in the room, contributing to the debate and answering questions raised by the Committee. They felt that it was important for the Committee to hear their perspectives and lived experiences alongside the legislation, policy and research-based analytical answers given by NGOs.

Children's Rights Alliance for England

The children's meeting

Children's meetings are not yet a formal part of the reporting process and must be worked into the Committee's pre-session schedule in advance. This can be facilitated by the NGO Group, so NGOs should also notify the NGO Group if they intend to support a children's delegation to meet with the Committee separately.

The children's meeting usually lasts for an hour and is scheduled either just before or just after the pre-session. The Chair of the Committee is usually present, along with the Committee member acting as Country Rapporteur for the State party examination (see details on the role of the Rapporteur in next section). Other Committee members will usually attend. The meeting is intended to be much less formal than the pre-session, and Committee members will often sit with children rather than in the more formal seating arrangement used for the pre-session.

The meeting is an opportunity for children to share their views (and those of children from their country). Children can decide whether or not they want the NGO representatives that are accompanying them to be present. In some cases, children have preferred to have NGOs present (to help them feel at ease or to support specific needs); in others, children have preferred to have a private meeting with the Committee. A representative of the NGO Group will also be present in the meeting in order to help facilitate it.

The Committee will introduce themselves and ask the children their names. It will then allow children to give a presentation on their main priorities, issues of concern and recommendations. In a manner different from the formal pre-sessional working group, Committee members will ask children one question at a time, rather than posing a series of questions. Children should speak into the microphones when signalled to do so by the Chair. After an hour, the Chair will close the meeting and thank the children for participating.



TIP: PowerPoint presentations or video are usually not arranged in the Committee's meeting room, but there have been a few positive exceptions when videos of children from Belgium and Korea were shown, for example. Please, inform the NGO Group if you have such a presentation and contacts will be made with the CRC Secretariat to explore the feasibility of using such devices.

When children who participated in a meeting with the Committee were asked about their experiences, almost all said they felt they had been listened to and that the Committee had wanted to hear what they had to say. It is important to prepare children for the limited time they will have with the Committee so that they do not have unrealistic expectations of the meeting. Children should be encouraged to see the meeting as an opportunity to highlight their major concerns and talk about what they want to see in the concluding observations; NGOs should remind children that the Committee will also take their report into account when formulating its concluding observations.

CASE STUDY

Preparing children for the meeting with the Committee, Kenya

The four young delegates selected by their peers to represent the views of children in Kenya had not travelled out of the country before. The NGO supporting them felt it was important to ensure that they were very well briefed, not only on different aspects of the reporting process but also, on what to expect when they arrived in Geneva. Training in public speaking and a familiarisation visit to the Palais Wilson prior to meeting with the Committee helped to build the confidence of the young delegates. An hour-long meeting took place between the young delegates and the Committee. Other adults were not present in order to give children the opportunity to lead the meeting and to focus on the issues that were of most concern to them. Each young delegate was asked to lead on a particular theme. The themes were chosen by children following a national meeting with key policy-makers in Kenya, and focused on: HIV/AIDS, the needs of children from rural communities, street children, and the needs of children in institutions. The young delegates each gave a short presentation about their theme (of which they had personal experience as well as representing the views of others) and answered questions from Committee members. Following the meeting, the young delegates participated as observers in the pre-sessional working group.

Kenyan Alliance for the Advancement of Children (KAACR)

The session

Scrutiny of a periodic State report extends over a day (two meetings of three hours each) and that of a report under an Optional Protocol extends over half a day (one three-hour meeting). Where reports under both Protocols have been submitted, the consideration in plenary session may be extended to one full day (two meetings of three hours each). When the CRC and both OPs are under review, the session is 1.5 days.

When the government comes before the Committee, members may pose additional questions and comments based on information received from NGOs and children. The governmental delegation will be invited to make a short opening statement which will be followed by a series of questions posed by Committee members.

NGOs and children should consider attending the plenary session. The session is public and although NGOs and children do not have a right to speak, they may participate as observers to obtain a comprehensive picture of the dialogue with the government. However, children might find it hard to follow an entire session of three hours, or simply get bored. The accompanying adults should anticipate breaks when the children can discreetly go out of the meeting room and de-brief in the cafeteria, or undertake other activities. In order to make observation more meaningful, it is also important to plan for individual or collective tasks (e.g. note down references to issues addressed in the children's report, select quotes from the government delegates to be used afterwards in the media or in other follow-up activities, draw participants in the session for comic strips or illustrations, etc.).

The NGO Group prepares summaries of the sessions,¹⁹ but this does not compare to “being there” and official summary records are often not available in all languages until months after the discussion. It may also be possible to meet with Committee members informally before and during the meeting with the government to present additional information, provide updates or suggest possible questions. The Committee does not meet formally with NGOs or children during the plenary session, though.

¹⁹ The summaries are available as country reports on www.childrightsnet.org

5. Sharing children’s perspectives through a rapporteur visit

For every State party examination, one or two members of the Committee are appointed as Country Rapporteurs – the lead Committee members for that examination. The Rapporteur will lead the Committee’s questioning of NGOs, UNICEF and the State party.

Many NGOs decide to invite the Country Rapporteur to visit their country in order to allow the Rapporteur – and by extension the Committee – to hear directly from children about their lives. The Rapporteur visit allows the Committee to meet children in their own environment, understand the main issues affecting children and can provide more time for children to discuss their concerns in a child friendly setting.

If the Rapporteur visit is occurring **before the State examination**, meetings organized should be with children and non-governmental representatives only, to avoid influencing the Committee’s views during the examination. However, if the Rapporteur visits after the examination of the State, meetings with government, NGO and ombudsperson representatives are encouraged and the focus should be on follow-up.

A Rapporteur visit is an extremely useful tool that allows larger numbers of children, and children from more diverse backgrounds, to actively participate in the CRC reporting process. It is especially useful where NGOs do not have the funding to bring a delegation to Geneva but wish to enable children to meet directly with Committee members.

Yet, once again, depending on the country context, inviting the Rapporteur can be negatively perceived or even entail risks. You should assess such risks and consider whether authorities should be informed or asked for their official consent, so as to secure the legitimacy of the visit and, most importantly, the safety of children talking to the Rapporteur.

Organizing a Rapporteur visit

Rapporteur visits are often funded by NGOs or UNICEF. Costs usually include flights, domestic travel, accommodation and possibly, a per diem for the Committee member concerned. There are no hard and fast rules for arranging Rapporteur visits, but NGOs should take the following into consideration:

- ▶ Allow sufficient time to invite the Committee member (initially through the Secretariat of the Committee and with support from the NGO Group if needed) and plan an effective visit
- ▶ Factor in time to obtain the appropriate visas required for the Rapporteur visit (if required)
- ▶ Approach stakeholders such as UNICEF, international NGOs, the children’s ombudsperson for assistance with funding and organizing the Rapporteur visit
- ▶ Appoint one person to liaise with the Committee member regarding the visit, particularly if multiple organizations are involved

- ▶ Involve children in the programme for the Rapporteur visit or support children to lead this work
- ▶ Ask the Rapporteur whether there is anything in particular he or she would like to see
- ▶ The benefit of including visits to different settings and institutions – such as children’s homes, local towns, hospitals, schools and juvenile correctional or detention centres as well as prisons²⁰
- ▶ Ensure variation in the programme of activities – examples include parliamentary events, meetings with children, discussions with NGOs about emerging and existing children’s rights violations, meeting government officials and visits to particular settings or institutions
- ▶ Which parts of the country the Rapporteur will visit – it is unlikely that visits will extend for longer than two to four days
- ▶ Identify opportunities to use the Rapporteur visit to raise awareness of children’s rights with children, the State party, the media, the judiciary and the general public.

CASE STUDY

A Rapporteur visit to Wales

The Rapporteur visit to Wales took place after the pre-session and prior to the State party examination in Geneva.

During the pre-session in Geneva, members of Funky Dragon (the children and young people’s assembly for Wales) met their Country Rapporteur for the first time. She had been invited to visit Wales by the Welsh Children’s Commissioner, for three days. For her forthcoming visit, the Rapporteur expressed an interest in having a chance to see how children really lived in Wales.

With this in mind, members of Funky Dragon invited the Rapporteur to meet with them in the 3G’s Project, in Gurnos Estate, in Merthyr Tydfil. This is one of Europe’s largest social housing estates and one of Wales’ most deprived areas with high levels of unemployment and sickness. The 3G’s Project is a haven for children and has provided many members of Funky Dragon over the years. At 3G’s, the Rapporteur met with the members of Funky Dragon and other children from the local area. They discussed the findings of Funky Dragon’s research with the children, and the Rapporteur heard about how the findings related to children’s day-to-day lives. After a formal meeting and discussion, she was invited by children for an exploratory walk around the estate. In true Welsh fashion the skies opened and rain poured down. *All credit to our Rapporteur, as she put on her coat and picked up her umbrella to accompany children in a walk around the area where they lived. After the walk, we all sought the warm dry sanctuary of a local pizza restaurant where conversations continued late into the night.*

The next afternoon we met again in the Welsh Assembly shiny buildings for formal speeches from Wales’ First Minister Rhodri Morgan, the Children’s Commissioner for Wales, and from the Rapporteur. During her speech, she thanked the children from Funky Dragon for arranging her visit – she had obviously enjoyed her trip up the Valleys!

Funky Dragon

See **Appendix 6** for examples of itineraries for visits by a Rapporteur from the Committee.

For an example of an agenda of a high-level meeting between children, NGOs and the UN Rapporteur, please see **Appendix 7**.

²⁰ As this publication went to press, the Committee was discussing when it was appropriate to meet with different actors during Rapporteur visits. For information on current practices, please contact the NGO Group for the CRC.

Strategically planning a Rapporteur visit

It is important to determine the most appropriate time for a Rapporteur visit to take place. This can depend on the particular context and the outcome which the children want to influence most. If the children wish to influence the concluding observations of the Committee, visits usually take place between the pre-sessional working group and the State party examination. However, if the children want to predominantly influence the follow-up to and implementation of the recommendations, the Rapporteur visit can occur after the session in order to create opportunities for joint children/Rapporteur meetings with the government, UN agencies, ombudsmen, NGOs and the media.

NGOs and children that have taken part in or supported Rapporteur visits have told the NGO Group that the visit had a significant impact not only on the content of the concluding observations, but also on the levels of awareness of children's rights among government officials and children in their country.

...it was very important that [the Rapporteur] visited our country. It was a concrete measure that made us feel that we were taken into account and important. Her participation in the public event motivated the children's organizations to work in relation to the defence and promotion of child rights. (Child speaking about the Rapporteur visit)²¹

²¹ NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child (2009), *Maximising children's engagement in the reporting process for the Convention on the Rights of the Child*.

6. Child reporting outcomes

Concluding observations

The concluding observations lay out the Committee's conclusions following a State party examination. They take into account the reports and meetings with the State, NGOs, UN agencies, ombudsmen, children, etc. Concluding observations set out the achievements of the State party in implementing the CRC, the Committee's concerns in relation to existing or potential children's rights violations, and the action the Committee requires the State party to take to remedy the situation or to further promote and protect children's rights. The concluding observations are sent to the State party by the Secretariat of the Committee. The NGO Group sends a copy of the concluding observations to all NGOs and child-led organizations that have submitted reports as part of the periodic reporting process.

Research carried out by the NGO Group shows that both the NGOs that have supported children to engage in the CRC reporting process and the children themselves overwhelmingly feel that **children's voices and experiences have been reflected in the Committee's concluding observations**.

It is important that NGOs make the concluding observations available to children in a form accessible to them **as soon as possible** after their publication. Disseminating the concluding observations to children is crucial to ensure they are able to be fully involved in the entire reporting process. Children may need support to identify where their input has had a direct or indirect influence on the recommendations.

Concluding observations can be downloaded from the website of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights at <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/sessions.htm>

Many NGOs have supported children to play a lead role in the dissemination of the concluding observations. Different methods of dissemination can include:

- ▶ Creating a children's version of the concluding observations
- ▶ Translating the concluding observations into national languages, including indigenous or minority languages
- ▶ Sending the concluding observations to all children that have participated in the reporting process, and to the organizations and adults that have supported them to do so
- ▶ Creating blogs, podcasts, online content and films to tell children about the concluding observations
- ▶ Organizing events to share the concluding observations with children and debate the action that should be taken. It is often useful to include the State party in this, helping it to fulfil its obligations to disseminate the concluding observations to children
- ▶ Working with children to decide how to monitor the progress of the State party in implementing the concluding observations

-
- ▶ Using the media – and the children’s media – to raise awareness and debate children’s rights issues
 - ▶ Encouraging member organizations to send out information about the concluding observations to the children they work with.

CASE STUDY

Disseminating the concluding observations, Peru

Further to their participation in the CRC reporting process in 2005, children from REDNNA Peru – the national network of children from Peru – felt that it was important to disseminate the concluding observations throughout the country. This process was carried out over the space of a year and was an immense joint effort by children from diverse backgrounds including members of school councils, working children, children without parental care, indigenous children, and uniformed organizations, supported by child rights NGOs.

Versions of the concluding observations were created for children both in Spanish and in Quechua. 21 public events were carried out all over Peru. Children presented the Committee’s concluding observations, and using age- and culturally-appropriate materials and methodologies showed participants how the concluding observations related to the reality of children’s lives. Children had the opportunity to analyse and debate the concluding observations with representatives of local authorities, develop solutions to some of the issues raised and encourage their commitment to implementing the concluding observations. Ensuring continuity was important, so national events were carried out also in Lima to raise awareness of the concluding observations among government officials and civil society.

A Vice Chair of the Committee was invited by child-led organizations to visit Peru and participate in the dissemination of the concluding observations. Children from many different regions and cultures presented a legislative proposal to members of Congress, obliging the Peruvian government to fully implement all the recommendations made by the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Save the Children Sweden: Latin America and the Caribbean

Follow-up work and ongoing monitoring

For children, as well as for NGOs and the State party, the publication of the concluding observations does not and should not signal the end of the CRC reporting process. Harnessing children’s enthusiasm for reporting and campaigning on children’s rights – and engaging them in children’s rights monitoring – will help to ensure children’s aspirations for and expectations of the CRC reporting process are met. It will help children to achieve change for children’s rights and have a real impact on law, policy and practice at national and local levels.

The range of work that NGOs can engage children in following the publication of the concluding observations is only limited by creativity (and funding!). The following list is by no means exhaustive but is intended to provide ideas from which NGOs can begin to plan sustained work to support children’s self advocacy and involvement in human rights monitoring:

- ▶ Campaigning on specific children’s rights issues raised by the concluding observations
- ▶ Promoting children’s rights through the media
- ▶ Raising awareness of children’s rights with government officials, practitioners and other adults working with children
- ▶ Supporting children to share information about children’s rights and human rights monitoring with their peers

-
- ▶ Planning for the next periodic reporting process based on lessons learned
 - ▶ Working directly with the State party to address the concluding observations
 - ▶ Securing parliamentary debates, inquiries and questions
 - ▶ Holding national events for children to discuss children's rights issues
 - ▶ Delivering children's rights outreach sessions in schools, youth clubs, children's homes and other institutions to raise awareness
 - ▶ Establishing a group to enable permanent, child-led monitoring of CRC compliance, using indicators developed by children
 - ▶ Supporting the use of concluding observations in litigation, including by raising judicial awareness of the text and status of the concluding observations
 - ▶ Ensure transfer and sharing of inter-generational experiences and skills – children grow out of their roles and often lose the opportunity for continuous engagement as young people

The follow-up process is key to changing the children's rights situation in your country. It is important to ensure that there are adequate human and financial resources for follow-up processes, and that they include children.

CASE STUDY

Monitoring the implementation of the concluding observations, England

Since 2002, in the annual *State of children's rights in England* report, CRAE analyses legislation, policy, statistical and practical research, conclusions from human rights and parliamentary monitoring bodies, court judgments, and research on children's views and experiences, in order to determine the progress the government has made against each of the Committee's recommendations. In 2009, with a new set of concluding observations, CRAE worked with children to create a children's version of the annual monitoring report, in order to support them to learn about children's human rights and to campaign for change in England. This is part of an ongoing programme to support children's activism and their own human rights campaigns on issues that concern them. By reviewing the findings from the children's rights investigation they undertook for the Committee in 2007 and taking into account the Committee's concluding observations, children began work in late 2008 on three campaigns: looking at the right to education for refugee and asylum-seeking children, the discrimination against children by the media, and the need for better mental health support for children in schools.

Children's Rights Alliance for England

Conclusion

Children's activism, exemplified by their involvement in the reporting process for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, adds a new perspective to human rights monitoring, and engenders real progress towards the realisation of children's rights, regardless of their age, background or circumstances. These guidelines have been based on the experiences of children and NGOs that have already taken part in the reporting process, and are strengthened by the commitment of the Committee to maximise the involvement and impact of children in their work.

We hope that will inspire and encourage you to develop this international partnership with children even further.

Contact the NGO Group for the CRC

NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child

1 rue Varembé

Geneva 1202

Switzerland

Telephone: (+41) 22 740 47 30

E-mail: secretariat@childrightsnet.org

Website: <http://www.childrightsnet.org>

Useful documents

NGO Group for the CRC documents

(see Publications section of: <http://www.childrightsnet.org/>)

- ▶ Reporting to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, My Pocket Guide, NGO Group for the CRC, 2011. (*Guide for children engaging in the CRC reporting process*)
- ▶ Reporting to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, a Guide for Non-governmental Organizations, NGO Group for the CRC, 2011.
- ▶ Reporting on the OPSC and OPAC, a Guide for Non-governmental Organizations, NGO Group for the CRC, 2011.
- ▶ Maximising children's engagement in the reporting process for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, NGO Group for the CRC, 2009.

Other tools

- ▶ Convention on the Rights of the Child, <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm>
- ▶ General Comment 12: the right of the child to be heard, Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2009. <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/AdvanceVersions/CRC-C-GC-12.doc>
- ▶ So you want to consult with children? A toolkit of good practice, International Save the Children Alliance, 2003, http://www.savethechildren.net/alliance/resources/childconsult_toolkit_final.pdf
- ▶ Children as change agents: Guidelines for child participation in periodic reporting on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, World Vision, 2008, http://www.crin.org/docs/Guidelines_for_Child_Participation_in_CRC_Reporting.pdf
- ▶ Implementation Handbook for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Implementation Checklists, UNICEF, 2007, <http://www.unicef.org/crc/files/Implementation%20Checklists.pdf>
- ▶ UNICEF Child and Youth Participation Resource Page: <http://www.unicef.org/adolescence/cypguide/resourceguide.html>
- ▶ UNICEF MAGIC website (Media Activities and Good Ideas by, with and for Children), <http://www.unicef.org/magic/index.html>
- ▶ Plan International Child Participation Publications Page: <http://plan-international.org/about-plan/resources/publications/participation>
- ▶ Save the Children Alliance Child Participation Publications Page: <http://www.savethechildren.net/alliance/resources/publications.html#participation>

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Example of a research ethics statement

Children's Rights Alliance
for England

Research ethics statement

1. Professional conduct

Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks must be carried out for all CRAE members of staff. If requested, a copy of their CRB certificate should be presented to the relevant gatekeeper prior to the commencement of research. Any individual, peer researcher or organization working for or on behalf of CRAE must demonstrate commitment to promoting human rights and equality in all aspects of their work. CRAE promotes the human dignity and equal worth of all individuals and equality between young people as well as between older and younger people.

2. Involving children and young people in research

All research methods must be tailored to the needs and capabilities of participants and piloted prior to the beginning of data collection. It is acknowledged that it may not be appropriate to consult with particular groups of children or young people in certain circumstances.

In peer-led research, children and young people are involved as far as possible in all stages of the research process. They are given ongoing support and training to do this. This will ensure that the interpretation of the findings is child-centred, relevant and grounded in the ethos of peer-led research. If time and resource constraints mean this is not feasible, alternative forms of engagement should be explored. All peer researchers are accompanied at all times during interviews by a member of CRAE staff. A thorough risk assessment must be carried out prior to commencing fieldwork.

3. Voluntary informed consent

It is the researcher's responsibility to ensure that all participants understand what the research is about, what their role will be, what will be done with the information they provide, and how and when the research findings will be published. Age-appropriate, jargon free language should be used to communicate these messages both verbally and in writing. Information leaflets relating to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child should also be provided to young participants and used to contextualise the aims of the research. Particular consideration should be given to accommodating the needs of participants with communication difficulties or learning impairments, and of participants for whom English is not their first language.

Verbal consent to participate in the research should be sought from children and young people at the beginning of each data collection session, and participants reminded that they are able to leave the room at any point. They should be advised that they are under no obligation to answer any interview question they are not comfortable with. Consent

forms stating the purpose of the research, the method of data collection and the extent to which the young person will be expected to engage in the research should also be signed and given to the researcher. Permission to tape-record conversations and to use artwork gathered through the data collection process should be sought from participants either verbally or in writing.

4. Parental consent

Participants aged 15 and under: The informed consent of both the child or young person and their parent or carer must be obtained.

Participants aged 16 and 17: Parental consent is not usually needed for young people aged 16 and 17. However, parental notification may be advisable depending on the nature of the research, the form of contact being initiated, and the young person's level of understanding.

It may be appropriate to seek parental consent for young people aged 16 and over if the nature of the research is particularly sensitive, if a high level of contact with the respondent is required, or if the young person does not fully understand what participation in the research entails.

If a child or young person is in care, parental consent should be obtained from either the parent or a person or body with parental responsibility for the child or young person, which may be the relevant local authority. (If there is no care order in place, a child's biological parents may still hold parental responsibility.)

5. Confidentiality and data protection

The terms "confidentiality" and "anonymity" must be explained to participants at the beginning of data collection. Where the research is conducted with groups of children and young people, two adults will usually be present during any data collection session. One of these adults will be a CRAE member of staff; the other will be from the organization facilitating the research interview and will be familiar with the children and young people participating. The adult from the facilitating organization will be made aware before the start of the research session that it will be their responsibility to follow up any disclosures made relating to child protection. Conversely, if any child protection issues arise concerning the involvement of a peer researcher, it is the responsibility of CRAE to follow up as set out in CRAE's *Working with children and young people* policy. All data will be processed in accordance with data protection law.

6. Anonymity

Researchers must remove all possible identifying features from all written, tape-recorded and art work submission prior to publication of any research findings.

7. Reciprocity

Researchers should ensure that the participation of all individuals involved in the research is recognised. Respondents should be thanked, sent a written acknowledgement of their contribution via the facilitating organization, and a copy of the published report. Reciprocity for peer researchers may include co-authorship of the research report, training, a certificate to acknowledge their contribution or an accredited qualification.

8. Reflective learning

Where appropriate, a debriefing session should be offered to respondents to reflect on how they found the interview experience. Debriefing sessions will always be carried out

with peer researchers. Evaluation forms will be used to record what children and young people have learned as a result of their experiences of doing research, and how this in turn may have developed their own social and personal skills.

9. Complaints procedures

There will always be a named person within CRAE whom participants can contact if they are unhappy with how the research has been carried out, how they have been treated by CRAE, or how they have been portrayed in publications. All complaints will be treated in accordance with CRAE's complaints procedure as set out in our *Working with children and young people* policy.

Appendix 2

Examples of children’s rights surveys

Survey 1: This was shared with us by the Child Rights Information Centre in the Republic of Moldova

Please fill in this questionnaire about children’s rights. Your opinion is very important so we encourage you to honestly answer all questions. You don’t need to write your name on this questionnaire. It is anonymous so no one will know what you said. Filling in the questionnaire will only take a few minutes.

Choose the best option that suits you (*put a sign in the box or circle, or write in your answer*).

1. I am a girl boy
2. I am years old
3. I live in a village city
4. I study in middle school high school college youth centre
5. Write down five children’s rights that you know
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
6. Where did you learn about these rights (*choose up to 3 answers*)?
 Parents
 Friends
 Teachers
 Media – newspapers / magazines / TV / radio
 Brochures / books
 Internet
 Somewhere else / someone else
7. In which document are children’s rights found?
.....
.....
.....

Survey 2: This was shared with us by the Children’s Rights Alliance for England in the UK. It is one of seven surveys they did with children about children’s rights. Each survey was on a different topic. This survey is about respect.

- 1. Do you have a say in decisions that affect your life?
 Always Most of the time Hardly ever Never Not sure
- 2. Do adults listen to what you have to say?
 Always Most of the time Hardly ever Never Not sure
- 3. Do you think children and young people are judged on the way they dress?
 Yes No Not sure
- 4. Who is most likely to be treated unfairly by adults (*you can choose more than one*)?
 Under-5s
 5 to 10 year-olds
 10 to 14 year-olds
 15 to 17 year-olds
 Over-18s
- 5. Do you think the police treat children fairly?
 Yes No Not sure
- 6. Do you think shop assistants treat children fairly?
 Yes No Not sure
- 7. There are lots of different types of children. For example, some children may have a different skin colour to you, or they may live at home or in care, they may have a disability, they may be from the travelling community, they may be a refugee or a young parent. Do you think one group of children in particular are **not** respected for who they are? Tell us who and why you think this.
.....
.....
.....
.....
- 8. To respect someone is about more than listening to their views. It also means valuing someone for who they are. Do you think there is enough respect between children (under-18s) and older people (over-65s)?
 Yes, there is enough respect between young and old people
 No, there isn’t enough respect between young and old people
 I’m not sure

If you answered yes, please skip to question 11.

9. If you said *no* or *I'm not sure* to question 8, which statement do you agree with?

- Older people don't usually respect younger people
- Younger people don't usually respect older people
- Neither group respects the other
- I'm not sure

10. What could improve respect between young and older people? (*You can tick more than one*)

- Having places where young and old people can meet
- Opportunities to learn more about one another
- Positive stories about children in the media
- Spending more time together
- Something else

11. Have you ever been treated unfairly by an adult? For example, have you ever been stopped from getting on a bus/train, from getting into the cinema or had difficulty getting help from a doctor or dentist because of your age?

- Yes No Not sure

If you answered no please go to question 13.

12. Please tell us why you were treated unfairly and how this made you feel.

.....

.....

.....

.....

13. Do you think the media (newspapers, television, magazines and radio) gives a fair picture of children living in England?

- Yes No Not sure

14. Please explain your answer

.....

.....

.....

.....

15. What could the media do to improve the way it represents children and young people?

.....

.....

.....

.....

Background details

- A. How old are you?
- B. Are you male female?
- C. Where are you from?
- East
 - East Midlands
 - London
 -
- D. Do you have a disability, or special needs? Yes No
- E. Are you...
- White
 - Black
 - Mixed heritage
 - Asian
 - Chinese
- F. Which of these best describes your home life?
- At home with my parents
 - With other people in my family
 - With friends
 - On my own
 - In a children's home
 - With foster carers
 - In a residential special school
 - In a boarding school
 - In custody
 - Other
- G. Which of these best describes where you get most of your education (*you can tick more than one box*)?
- School or college
 - Pupil referral unit
 - Educated at home
 - I am not getting any education at the moment
 - This doesn't apply to me – I'm too young
 - This doesn't apply to me – I'm too old
 - This doesn't apply to me for another reason (*please explain*)
.....

Appendix 3

Template risk assessment – children’s rights research project

This template will need to be adapted and added to in order to reflect the particular needs of children involved in the research and the different methodologies and approaches used.

| RISK | ACTION TAKEN TO MINIMISE RISK | ACTION TAKEN IF RISK OCCURS |
|--|---|--|
| Children do not feel safe at the venue | On arrival, staff will familiarise all children with the venue, point out key areas and let them know who else is using the venue. | Staff always on hand to deal with any concerns. Participants approaching staff with anxieties should be taken aside, and the problems discussed and resolved. |
| Young researchers arrive unprepared | Briefing papers will be sent to young researchers and they will be invited to discuss any questions or concerns with support staff prior to the interview. Researchers have received training and are aware of their role and the materials that will be used in the research with participants. A support worker will meet researchers prior to every interview to run a short briefing and ensure they are confident in explaining the research and leading the discussion. The support worker will also be present during the interview to support the researcher. | If, after discussion, a young researcher does not feel confident about explaining the research brief to participants, the supporter worker will introduce the research and support the young researcher to ask questions during the interview, encouraging them to take the lead wherever possible. |
| An interviewee turns up to the interview without a signed consent form | Consent forms will be sent to children prior to the research taking place (with consent required from children, and also from parents/carers if the child is under-16). | Verbal consent will be requested from participants prior to the interview and they will be reminded that they can leave at any point, and are not required to answer questions they feel uncomfortable with. The use of pseudonyms will be explained. |
| Participants are not clear about the purpose or aims of the research | Clear information and consent forms are sent to children prior to their participation. The researcher will introduce the research at the start of the interview, clearly explaining the aims and what will happen with the research. | Participants will be encouraged to ask questions at any point; the aims of the research will be reiterated as necessary. They will be reminded that their views will be anonymous, and that their participation is voluntary – they do not have to answer any questions they do not feel comfortable with, and may stop the interview at any time. |

| RISK | ACTION TAKEN TO MINIMISE RISK | ACTION TAKEN IF RISK OCCURS |
|--|--|---|
| <p>Children become distressed at questions asked or answered during the interview</p> | <p>A copy of the interview questions will be sent to the organizer prior to the interview. The researcher will contact the host organization in advance to ask if any issues have arisen that the researchers need to be aware of.</p> <p>Participants will be reminded they can leave the room at any point during the discussion and that they do not have to answer any questions they do not want to. Researchers will be briefed about the sensitivity of the interview and asked to be supportive of any answers given by participants.</p> <p>Two young researchers will lead each interview.</p> | <p>If a child becomes distressed they shall be given the option of leaving the room and an adult should accompany the child. Issues should be followed up in accordance with the organization's child protection policy.</p> <p>If a young researcher becomes distressed during the interview, the above will apply. An additional young researcher will be on hand to continue the interview if appropriate.</p> |
| <p>Information is disclosed during an interview which raises serious child protection issues</p> | <p>The researchers are aware of techniques to discourage children from disclosing personal information, and have been briefed on procedures to follow in the event of a disclosure. It has been made clear to researchers and participants that the intention of the research is not to encourage such disclosures.</p> <p>Appropriate adults to support children will be available as required. The organization's child protection policy will govern how issues that have been disclosed are dealt with and followed up.</p> | <p>Should a disclosure be made in a focus group, the researcher should sensitively halt the discussion of that particular issue and, if necessary, remove the child from the session (accompanied by an appropriate staff member). Disclosures should subsequently be dealt with in line with the organization's child protection policy, and respect the child's confidentiality.</p> |
| <p>Children allege that they have been abused or mistreated during the meeting</p> | <p>All staff have appropriate child protection checks and will work in line with the organization's child protection policy.</p> | <p>If an allegation is made during an interview, the on-call manager should be contacted immediately. The adult concerned should have no further contact with the child concerned. The procedures in the organization's child protection policy should be followed, keeping the child informed at each stage and respecting their confidentiality.</p> |

Appendix 4

Tips for children on writing a children's rights report

The aim of your report is to tell the Committee about the children's rights issues that really matter to children.

1. Before you start writing, you must **decide how to organize your report**. There are lots of ways to do this. When governments and NGOs submit reports to the Committee, they are asked to present them in eight chapters which reflect the different rights in the CRC. You might want to present your report like this, or perhaps in chapters that show the main themes of your findings.
2. Decide whether you want to **include pictures, photographs, drawing and quotes from children** in your report. These can really help to get your message across. It can also make your report much more interesting.
3. Once you've decided how you're going to organize your report, and what your report is going to look like, **it's time to start writing**. It's very important to remember who you are writing for – the Committee on the Rights of the Child – a group of 18 adult experts on children's rights.
4. Remember that the **Committee members might not share your first language, so you will need to write clearly** (especially if you are going to have your report translated into another language). Think about what words you use – slang and jargon doesn't easily translate into another language, and might not mean anything to someone who comes from a different country to you.
5. **You don't have to write loads** – sometimes it is more effective to keep your text short and simple. This can be more powerful.
6. **Think about your choice of quotes carefully.**
 - Are the quotes powerful and will they back up your argument?
 - Whose voice is being represented? Do the quotes represent lots of children or just one group?
 - Do your quotes support the evidence from your research?
7. **Include recommendations in your report** to show the Committee what children think needs to be done to improve children's rights in your country.
8. When you've finished writing your report, **try reading it from a stranger's point of view**. Do you think it clearly explains the background to your work? Does it clearly explain which children have shared their views and experiences with you? Does it tell a story about children's rights in your country?

Appendix 5

Programme from a weekend residential to prepare the children's delegation to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, Children's Rights Alliance for England

Delegation residential programme

| SATURDAY | |
|----------|--|
| 13.00 | Lunch |
| 13.45 | Welcome, ground rules and games |
| 14.00 | The role of the delegation, and aims and expectations |
| 14.45 | Children's human rights and the CRC |
| 15.30 | Break |
| 15.45 | The CRC reporting process |
| 16.15 | Progress on the Get ready project and achievements so far |
| 16.30 | The children's rights investigation – understanding the methods and being able to explain them to others |
| 16.45 | Break |
| 17.00 | Preparing for going to Geneva part 1: Key research findings |
| 18.40 | Roles on delegation |
| 19.00 | Dinner |
| SUNDAY | |
| 09.00 | Games |
| 09.30 | Recap of Saturday – any questions? |
| 09.45 | What happened in 2002 (the last UK examination) |
| 10.45 | Going to Geneva – what to expect? |
| 11.30 | Preparing for going to Geneva part 2: Role plays and answering questions |
| 13.00 | Lunch |
| 13.45 | Preparing for going to Geneva part 3: Media training |
| 15.00 | Roles on the delegation |
| 15.30 | Next steps – rapporteur visit and the government examination |
| 15.45 | Things to do before June 2008 |
| 16.00 | Finish |

Appendix 6

Example itineraries for a visit by the rapporteur from the Committee on the Rights of the Child

1. Programme for Country Rapporteur visit to Wales, 3 and 4 September 2008 (between the pre-session and the session)

| WEDNESDAY 3 SEPTEMBER | | THURSDAY 4 SEPTEMBER | | |
|-----------------------|---|--|---|--|
| AM | <p>Professor Lucy Smith arrives in London</p> <p>12:15pm train from London Paddington to Cardiff</p> | Cardiff Station | <p>09:30–11:00 Poverty experts Meeting (Anne Crowley, Sean O’Neil, Children’s Commissioner Keith Towler)</p> <p>11:15–12:45 Youth justice meeting (Keith Towler, Catriona Williams, Suzanne Chisholm)</p> | <p>Millennium Centre</p> <p>Millennium Centre</p> |
| PM | <p>15:15 Leave Cardiff for the Valleys by car</p> <p>16:00 Visit to Valley Kids</p> <p>16:30 Leave for Merthyr by car</p> <p>17:15 Meet Funky Dragon in Merthyr Tydfil</p> <p>(Members of Funky Dragon were part of the Welsh NGO delegation at the pre-session. A larger group of children will meet with the rapporteur to discuss the key issues for them.)</p> <p>18:30 Guided tour of valley community with children</p> | <p>Dinas, Rhondda Valley</p> <p>Merthyr Tydfil</p> | <p>13:00 Lunch</p> <p>14:00 Gypsy and traveller site visit: Shire Newtown and Rover Way</p> <p>16:00–17:00 Meet monitoring group and report contributors (Ty Howell)</p> <p>17:00–18:00 Meet the Welsh Assembly Minister for Children, Education, Lifelong Learning and Skills, Jane Hutt</p> | <p>Cardiff</p> <p>Cardiff Bay</p> <p>Cardiff Bay</p> |
| Eve | <p>19:30 Dinner with children</p> <p>Overnight accommodation</p> | <p>Merthyr Tydfil</p> <p>Holland House Hotel</p> | <p>18:00–19:00 Reception hosted by the First Minister, Rt Hon Rhodri Morgan AM</p> <p>19:30 Informal Commissioner’s Dinner</p> <p>Overnight accommodation</p> | <p>Cardiff Bay</p> <p>Holland House Hotel</p> |

2. Programme for Country Rapporteur visit to Peru, 3 to 6 July 2006 (after the session)

| ACTIVITY | | AIM |
|--------------------|--|---|
| 3 JULY 2006 | | |
| 09:00–11:00 | Ministry of Foreign Affairs | Enhance role of Foreign Affairs Ministry in reviewing the State party report and as a source of information for the UN Committee. |
| 11:00–13:00 | Inter-agency forum for the follow-up of the National Plan of Action for Children | This included the ministries of health, education, labour, and women and social development; the aim was to make commitments for taking forward the concluding observations. |
| 13:00–15:00 | Lunch with UNICEF | |
| 15:30–17:00 | Ombudsman's Office | Strengthen relationships between the Ombudsman and child-led organizations. |
| 17:30–19:00 | Meeting with children from child-led organizations | Rosa Maria Ortiz to meet with the children that have arranged the rapporteur visit. |
| 4 JULY 2006 | | |
| 08:30–14:30 | Training seminar for Peruvian government officials | Raise awareness of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the reporting process, reports from the State party, NGOs and children, and the content of the concluding observations. Emphasis placed on the participation of state agencies working with children, for example the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Justice, State Prosecutor and MIMDES Children and Adolescent Department. |
| 5 JULY 2006 | | |
| 08:30–10:00 | Congress members | Meeting with representatives from Congressional committees addressing subjects affecting children, to identify the obligations of the Congress of the Republic of Peru. |
| 10:15–14:00 | National public conference to disseminate the concluding observations | Attended by Congress members, government officials and children; moderated by two children from REDNNA who presented commitments made by local and regional authorities during 21 events held to disseminate the concluding observations throughout Peru. Presentation of a draft Supreme Decree to fulfil the concluding observations. |
| 16:00 | Press conference | |
| 6 JULY 2006 | | |
| 09:00–17:00 | Seminar with civil society organizations | In-depth discussions among children's rights NGOs about the concluding observations; Rosa Maria Ortiz provides information on CRC reporting processes and the concluding observations for Peru. |

Appendix 7

Agenda for a high-level meeting between children, NGOs and the Country Rapporteur

Children's Rights Alliance
for England



UK Committee on the Rights of the Child
UK examination, 2008
Country Rapporteur visit to England

Breakfast meeting with Professor Lucy Smith

Sunday 7 September 2008, 9–12.30 pm

The Library, The Chesterfield Mayfair Hotel, 35 Charles Street, Mayfair, London, W1J 5EB

In attendance: senior representatives from 11 MILLION (office of Children's Commissioner for England), Equality and Human Rights Commission, The Children's Society, CRAE Secretariat, NSPCC, Save the Children UK and UK National Committee for UNICEF

- 8.45 am Arrival, coffee and pastries
- 9.00 am Welcome and purpose of event
- Short presentations and discussions
- **Children's position in society**
Abdul Munie, Get ready for Geneva
Lauren Harrison, Get ready for Geneva
 - **Juvenile justice**
Chris Callender, Assistant Director (Legal), Howard League for Penal Reform
Tim Bateman, Senior Policy Development Officer, Nacro
 - **Asylum and Immigration**
Nadine Finch, Barrister, Garden Court Chambers
Lisa Nandy, Chair of Refugee Children's Consortium
- 10.30 am Refreshments
- 10.40 am Short presentations and discussions
- **Children's access to justice**
Fiona Burrough, in-house Counsel and Policy Co-ordinator, Just for Kids Law
James Kenrick, Advice Services Development Manager, Youth Access
 - **Children's right to privacy**
Terri Dowty, Director of Action on Rights for Children
Dr Eileen Munro, Reader in Social Policy, London School of Economics
 - **Child poverty and inequality**
Paul Dornan, Head of Policy and Research, Child Poverty Action Group
Jason Strelitz, Child Poverty Adviser, Save the Children UK
- 12.10 pm General discussion
- 12.30 pm END

NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child

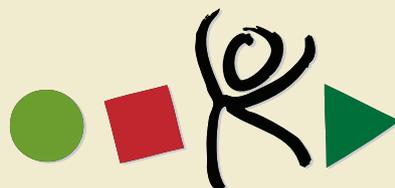
1, rue de Varembé
1202 Geneva, Switzerland

Tel: +41 22 740 47 30

Fax: +41 22 740 46 83

E-mail: secretariat@childrightsnet.org

Website: www.childrightsnet.org



ngo group for the crc