



*ROADMAP*  
*2018 DGD Follow-up Technical meeting*  
**Protection and Empowerment of Children as Human Rights Defenders**  
Friday 14 June 2019, Room 1-016, Palais Wilson, Geneva

## 1. Introduction

On 14<sup>th</sup> June 2019, the **Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC Committee)**, the **UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders**, the **Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)** and **Child Rights Connect** organised a technical meeting to follow-up on the 2018 Day of General Discussion (DGD) on “Protecting and Empowering Children as Human Rights Defenders (CHRDs)”. The technical meeting provided a space to discuss and identify follow-up actions to implement the [DGD outcome recommendations](#).<sup>1</sup>

Participants included children and young advocates, Treaty Bodies’ members, Special Procedures mandate holders, the President of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR), and representatives from OHCHR, UNICEF, civil society organisations and other experts.

This roadmap gathers the agreed follow-up actions and commitments to support the implementation of the DGD recommendations at the local, national, regional and international levels. The roadmap is intended to be a living document which will be collectively used to monitor and encourage follow-up to the DGD.

## 2. Discussions and conclusions

The **session on norms and practice at the international level** covered how CHRDs can be further recognized, empowered and protected by the international and regional human rights mechanisms, building on the DGD outcome recommendations.

Participants discussed the need for international human right mechanisms to further develop standards and practices on the protection and empowerment of CHRDs. Contributing to these efforts, the CRC Committee started to include CHRDs into Concluding Observations prior to the 2018 DGD and has increasingly

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<sup>1</sup> The DGD outcome recommendations can be found in the *DGD 2018 Protecting and Empowering Children as Human Rights Defenders Report*, Committee on the Rights of the Child, p. 32-36

done so after. Child Rights Connect has developed a [Children's Empowerment Monitor](#) to analyse how CHRDs and child participation is addressed by the CRC Committee.

Participants agreed that children's engagement in human rights mechanisms is key to make sure that their work is effective and relevant to CHRDs. At present, such child participation in these fora is seen as a concession, while it should be intrinsic to the system. It was highlighted that the very concept of "child participation" should be redefined, with a shift towards a systematic, inclusive and child-led participation. To this purpose, it is essential that:

1. Child-friendly and accessible information on the United Nations is made available to children,
2. CRC Committee standards and good practices are mainstreamed within the United Nations human rights system, and
3. The linkages between child participation and children's civil rights and freedoms are further elaborated and strengthened. Participants agreed on the need to study in more depth how these rights are exercised by CHRDs. The next General Comment of the Human Rights Committee, which will focus on the right to peaceful assembly, was identified as a key opportunity to further elaborate on how CHRDs can be empowered and protected when exercising this right.

Participants agreed to promote the mainstreaming of children's rights and child participation among treaty bodies, special procedures and more broadly within the OHCHR.

The **session on laws and policies at the national level** served to exchange on prevailing barriers and existing or emerging legal and policy frameworks relevant to the protection and empowerment of CHRDs.

The children and young defenders at the meeting emphasised that children are usually seen as apathetic and disengaged, and even when they are given the space to act as human rights defenders, they are not listened to, and therefore feel disempowered. They highlighted the urgency to make States fulfil their obligations with regard to children's right to be heard as a baseline for the realisation of all the other child rights.

The United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders<sup>2</sup> and the legal framework that it brings about is a unique tool that can enhance the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) at the national level, particularly in relation to the right to be heard and participate in decision-making. For instance, this framework can serve to create appropriate and relevant mechanisms for child participation in the civic space. Children and young defenders at the meeting made it clear that children should be empowered to design and co-create such mechanisms, and that there were pitfalls to simply replicating mechanisms used by adults and established only by them.

On the other hand, the UNCRC is essential for the translation of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders into national laws and policies. There have been preliminary attempts to include children's rights into the legal framework for the protection and empowerment of human rights defenders, however further

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<sup>2</sup> Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, adopted by General Assembly resolution 53/144 of 9 December 1998.

efforts should be made to ensure the full implementation of the DGD outcome recommendation to States to develop and adopt comprehensive national laws and policies on the protection and empowerment of human rights defenders with a child rights-based approach. It was made clear that there are still major legal and policy gaps and a strong call was made for concrete guidance on how to further integrate children's rights in this framework and to ensure children are consulted in the process.

Separate **working groups on protection and empowerment were established**, keeping in mind that the two concepts should be seen as integrated and mutually reinforcing.

The working group on protection identified a lack of understanding and information on the risks that CHRDs face, including the different forms of violence that they experience. Participants agreed that there is a need to undertake an analysis of the situation to be able to identify the necessary protection measures to be put in place. In addition, children should be provided with the necessary information on the possible risks, such as reprisals and other negative consequences, and on how to protect themselves and seek redress if needed. Guidance needs to be developed to implement the DGD recommendation to States to ensure that protection measures are not used to reduce the scope of action of child human rights defenders, including in the online space.

The working group on empowerment discussed child rights education as the main pillar to the empowerment of CHRDs. In school settings there should be a whole-school approach to human rights and educators should ensure that human rights are taught maintaining their legal component to enable CHRDs to act using the law. In a broader context, it was identified that the State should support and protect children's spaces at the institutional level to empower CHRDs and to ensure their contribution to public policy. States should furthermore also support children and adolescents' spaces for peer learning and exercising their own leadership. Participants discussed existing child participation policies and the need for guidance to undertake gaps assessments and policy development.

### 3. Roadmap

DGD Outcome Report Recommendations (see below short summary of combined recommendations)	Commitments (made by participants during the follow-up meeting)	Participants and organisations (in charge of commitment implementation)
<b>Recommendations to States</b>		
<u>General Recommendations</u>  <i>Take all appropriate measures to create safe spaces for CHRDs; give due consideration to their views in decision-making; support families in fulfilling their role in protecting and empowering CHRDs; and ensure that protection measures are not used to reduce the scope of CHRDs' actions.</i>	Identify mechanisms established by children for participatory governance, which do not reproduce traditional structures used by adults.  Identify funding opportunities to conduct research on “new spaces” for children to participate in governance and decision-making, including through social media.  Broaden the interaction with children, empower them with more information and knowledge, and support them so they can identify themselves as CHRDs.	Child Advocate (Ariadna)  Researcher Dublin City University (Gabriela Martinez Sainz)  Child Advocate (Maxwell)
<u>Legislation, policy and implementation</u>  <i>Develop and adopt comprehensive national laws and policies on the protection and empowerment of human rights defenders with a child rights-based approach; consult with children when drafting legislation and take into account their views; ensure</i>	Develop a toolkit for States on the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Defenders <sup>3</sup> in conformity with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), in consultation with children. The toolkit should include existing material relevant to CHRDs, such as the OHCHR Guidelines for States on the effective implementation of the right to participate in public affairs. <sup>4</sup>  Coordinate with Child Rights Connect and its members as relevant when commenting and advising on draft laws relevant to human rights defenders to properly integrate a child rights-based approach (building on the coordination established to comment on Guinea’s draft law on the protection of human rights defenders and the draft law for the establishment of associations).	Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders  International Service for Human Rights (Vincent Ploton)

<sup>3</sup> Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, adopted by General Assembly resolution 53/144 of 9 December 1998.

<sup>4</sup> [Guidelines for States on the effective implementation of the right to participate in public affairs](#), OHCHR.

<i>effective implementation of legislation and policies for CHRDs.</i>	Monitor and assess States' compliance with national and intersectional public policies relevant to the rights of CHRD ensuring, for instance, that appropriate authorities respect and support children's participation spaces.	President Inter-American Commission on Human Rights
<u>Freedom of expression and participation in decision-making</u>  <i>Ensure CHRDs' access to free and accessible information, so they can express their opinion and take part in decision-making, especially for CHRDs in vulnerable situations. Mechanisms such as Children's Parliaments should have a clear and meaningful mandate and be provided with the necessary resources.</i>	Identify possibilities for children to be consulted on the drafting process of the Human Rights Committee General Comment on Article 21 (Right of Peaceful Assembly) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.	Human Rights Committee (José Manuel Santos Pais)
	Provide inputs to the draft Human Rights Committee General Comment on Article 21 (Right of Peaceful Assembly) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and gather input from children.	Child Rights Connect
	Contribute to the current development and forthcoming circulation of the Child Campaigning Sector Standards, which will provide principles for civil society to best enable child led / centred civic action and campaigning.	Child Rights Connect; Amnesty International (Anna Roguski)
<u>Education</u>  <i>Recognise the role of education in empowering CHRDs. States should ensure human rights education for children, including on the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders; ensure child participation in schools and teach children conflict management tools to resolve confrontation; provide training for school staff to avoid the use of punitive measures.</i>	Request States to include training on human rights in school curriculum in addition to such training for courts and law enforcement officials.	Human Rights Committee (José Manuel Santos Pais)
	Disseminate the user-friendly version of the Declaration on Human Rights Defenders developed by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders and circulate it among children to gather their feedback.	Child Rights Connect
	Develop more child-friendly material and encourage others to do so, including by using a forthcoming joint UNICEF and Child Rights Connect Guide (being developed by Queens University Belfast) on developing child-friendly texts with children.	Child Rights Connect
	Develop and publish materials relevant to CHRDs and adults working for their protection and empowerment.	Misean Cara (Harry Shier)
<u>Access to remedial mechanisms</u>  <i>Ensure access to child-friendly complaint mechanisms at all levels and consider ratifying the Optional</i>	Encourage Amnesty International's entities to campaign for the ratification of OPIC.	Amnesty International (Anna Roguski)

<i>Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a Communications Procedure (OPIC).</i>		
<b>Recommendations to Children’s Ombudspersons and National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs)</b>		
<i>Disseminate information about their mandate among CHRDs, work more closely with them and support them in accessing justice.</i>	When engaging with NHRIs, gather information on their work at the local level with respect to children and encourage them to do more if necessary.	Human Rights Committee (José Manuel Santos Pais)
<b>Recommendations to the Committee on the Rights of the Child</b>		
<i>The Committee should recommend States parties to develop, adopt and implement legislation and policies aiming at protecting CHRDs and ensure children’s participation in the process, and strengthen cooperation with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights Defenders to guide States in this regard; promote a positive narrative about CHRDs.</i>	During the dialogue with States Parties, continue to monitor and assess national laws and policies through the lens of CHRDs’ rights, including through a more explicit link to child participation and civil rights and freedoms. Commend States when there are good practices.	Committee on the Rights of the Child (Philip Jaffé, Mikiko Otani and Luis Pedernera Reyna)
	Include in the Concluding Observations recommendations for the protection and empowerment of CHRDs.	
	Explore the idea of creating a webpage for children with child-friendly versions of the documents of the Committee on the Rights of the Child.	Committee on the Rights of the Child (Mikiko Otani)
	Give more visibility to the work of CHRDs in the biannual reports to the General Assembly of the Committee on the Rights of the Child by including a section dedicated to child participation.	Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (Allegra Franchetti)
	Empower children and civil society organisations working with children to disseminate Concluding Observations in a child-friendly way and include children in the follow-up.	Child Rights Connect
<b>Recommendations to the United Nations</b>		
<i>Provide CHRDs with age-appropriate and timely information about the United Nations for their effective engagement; promote the participation of CHRDs in the United Nations’ work related to children’s rights by putting in place in-person or</i>	Promote and advance the use of language based on children’s rights and the recognition of children as right-holders of civil and political rights by the United Nations system as a whole.	Child Rights International Network (Isabelle Kolebinov)
	Promote the establishment of a group of like-minded Special Procedures to work on the rights of CHRDs, including the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression and the Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association. This would serve to identify ways to be more active in the protection and	Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders

<p><i>virtual child-friendly platforms and processes for engagement.</i></p> <p><i>Treaty bodies should promote the participation of CHRDs in the review of States parties and recommend States to adopt legislation for the protection and empowerment of CHRDs.</i></p>	<p>empowerment of CHRDs, including through consulting with them and giving due consideration to their views.</p> <p>Engage with Special Procedures mandate holders to promote child participation.</p>	<p>Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (Orest Nowosad)</p>
	<p>Continue to include a specific section on CHRDs in the country and thematic reports.</p>	<p>Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders</p>
	<p>Continue to collaborate with and include Child Rights Connect in relevant activities and discussions relating to human rights defenders. For instance, involve Child Rights Connect in the upcoming Seminar being organised by the International Service for Human Rights, the National Human Rights Commission of Mongolia and the Special Rapporteur on Human Rights Defenders on Mongolia’s draft law on human rights defenders.</p>	<p>Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders</p>
	<p>Identify how the Human Rights Committee can give more attention to CHRDs and explore if more participation of children could be realized.</p> <p>Look into how treaty bodies beside the Committee on the Rights of the Child can provide for meaningful participation of children. For instance, at the regional consultations for the CEDAW draft General Recommendation on trafficking in women and girls in the context of global migration.</p> <p>Explore the possibilities to raise awareness about and promote participation of CHRD in the work of other treaty bodies.</p> <p>Use all relevant opportunities to convey and support children’s voices, both within UNICEF and when engaging with human rights mechanisms.</p>	<p>Human Rights Committee (José Manuel Santos Pais)</p> <p>Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (Orest Nowosad)</p> <p>Committee on the Rights of the Child (Mikiko Otani)</p> <p>UNICEF (Anne Grandjean)</p>
	<p>Encourage UNICEF country offices to promote and support meaningful child participation in national reporting processes to treaty bodies and the UPR and to involve CHRDs when discussing the implementation of the Concluding Observations.</p>	<p>UNICEF (Anne Grandjean)</p>

	Promote a child-rights strategy for the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.	Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (Orest Nowosad and Allegra Franchetti)
	Look into OHCHR's strategy on civil society space and how it addresses the role of CHRD.	
	Reach out to children in the process of redesigning the OHCHR website and include children in the new website testing phase to include their views and opinions.	Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (Monica Nascimento e Silva)
	Continue to support the 2018 DGD follow-up process and continue to collaborate closely with Child Rights Connect.	Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (Allegra Franchetti)
	Include advocacy on CHRDs in the work of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children, for instance by meeting with CHRD during country visits and taking the lead in analysing forms of violence against CHRDs.	Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children (Annette Lyth)
	Disseminate the child-friendly version of the CRC and icons, and support stakeholders in using them as a way to empower CHRDs. Broadly disseminate other relevant UNICEF resources through Child Rights Connect.	UNICEF (Marie Wernham)
<b>Recommendations to civil society</b>		
<i>Empower and work with CHRD, disseminate information on their work to a variety of audiences and promote positive attitudes towards them, in particular girls; ensure participation of CHRD in civil society's human rights work and support CHRD in accessing justice; protect CHRD from any form of reprisals and take the necessary precautions to minimize any negative impact CHRD's actions may have.</i>	Ensure the 2019 Amnesty International campaign "Write for rights" - which in 2019 has a specific focus on children and young human rights defenders - raises the voice of CHRD and calls for support and their protection.	Amnesty International (Anna Roguski)
	Bring a gender lens to the discussions on CHRD, by giving adequate attention to the distinct needs of girls and promoting measures for, gender non-discrimination.	Plan International (Lorraine Ni Annrachain)
	Plan International's regional youth camps to contribute insights to support the monitoring of the situation for CHRD, including support to better understand violence faced by CHRD, through providing networking and a platform for CHRDs to share experiences.	Plan International (Lorraine Ni Annrachain)
	Continue to support child-led campaigning in various ways. Reach out and collaborate with other organisations working to support children in setting the child rights agenda.	Save the Children (Sigurd Johns)



<b>Recommendations to the media</b>		
<i>Promote a positive image of CHRD and report on their human rights activities.</i>	Launch discussions on CHRD within the Media Network on Child Rights and Development and with the National Child Rights Forum and coordinate with Child Rights Connect.	Media Network on Child Rights and Development (Hermis Maunda)
	Engage with media regarding how to report ethically on CHRD.	Media Network on Child Rights and Development (Hermis Maunda)
<b>Additional commitments</b>		
<b>Relating to all recommendations</b>	Monitor participants' progress in implementing the commitments made at the DGD follow-up technical meeting.	Children Advocates (Ariadna and Maxwell)
	Introduce and disseminate the DGD outcome recommendations among children in Mongolia.	Child Advocate (Miga)
	Commit to work with and reach out to more children.	Young Advocate (Holly Shorey)
<b>At the regional level</b>	Permanently monitor the situation of children human rights defenders in the region of the Americas in order to better understand and address the issue.	President Inter-American Commission on Human Rights
	Strengthen the collaboration with civil society organisations, including NHRIs, to create spaces for child participation and consultation with children human rights defenders.	
	Engage with the IACHR Rapporteur on the Rights of Human Rights Defenders for the inclusion of CHRD in the next report of the IACHR on human rights defenders.	
	In the framework of the review of the European Union Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders <sup>5</sup> , coordinate with Child Rights Connect for the inclusion of a child rights-based approach for the protection and empowerment of CHRD in the Guidelines.	Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders / Child Rights Connect

<sup>5</sup> [European Union Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders.](#)