

child rights connect



Annual Report 2014

About Us

Child Rights Connect

Child Rights Connect is one of the largest international child rights networks committed to ensuring that all children fully enjoy their rights as defined by the CRC. Through our members we work in more than 175 countries with programmes that reach over 270 million children.



The network was created in 1983 as the *Ad Hoc NGO Group for the drafting of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child*, a group of 20 NGOs working together for a comprehensive treaty on children's rights. Our significant impact on the text of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) demonstrated the power of NGOs joining forces for children's rights. Since then, our network has served as a model and been replicated throughout the world.

For more than 30 years, Child Rights Connect has been at the forefront of promoting children's rights at international level, including playing a central role in drafting other UN treaties, such as the recent Optional Protocol on a Communications Procedure, as well as other major international developments.

Together with our members, partners and children themselves, we connect the daily realities of children to international human rights mechanisms and processes, especially the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (the Committee), Human Rights Council and its Universal Periodic Review.

By supporting national and regional actors to engage with UN human rights mechanisms, we contribute to making these mechanisms more effective vehicles for change at national level.

Vision

Child Rights Connect envisions a world in which children's rights, as defined by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, are universally recognised and realised.

Mission

Child Rights Connect's mission is to facilitate the promotion, implementation and monitoring of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Strategic priorities for 2010–2014:

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

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

Cover image: Two boys read books together in a small village of Dhar District, India. © 2012 chetan soni, courtesy of Photoshare.



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Foreword



During my time as President of the Human Rights Council (HRC), from 2011 to 2012, and the Permanent Representative of Uruguay to the UN in Geneva (2009 to 2014), I had the occasion to renew my faith in the international system of protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms, a valuable multi-lateral effort, to which human and children's rights NGOs make important contributions.

To promote the rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Child Rights Connect network has built the capacity of national NGOs to engage with

the Committee on the Rights of the Child (the Committee), the Human Rights Council and its Universal Periodic Review (UPR). The organisation has been a main civil society partner, supporting the work of the major UN bodies and mandates on children's rights, the Committee, which is the principle Treaty Body charged with following up on the implementation of the CRC, as well as the work of the Special Rapporteur on sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and both Special Representatives of the UN Secretary General on children and armed conflicts and on violence against children.

From a governmental perspective, I continue to find permanent interaction with civil society organisations to be essential to the work of the HRC. At the multi-lateral level, this interaction brings local voices, experience and thematic research to enrich debates and the preparation of resolutions, such as the Annual Resolution on the Rights of the Child, for which the NGO inputs have always been requested. Additionally, Child Rights Connect has been instrumental in the preparation of the HRC Annual Day of Discussion on the Rights of the Child in several ways, such as by helping to identify relevant experts that can share good practices and existing challenges on the selected subjects, and by including the voices of children as rights-holders. This participatory process is beneficial for follow-up activities, which help to translate HRC resolutions into action on the ground.

Finally, Child Rights Connect has been a key actor in promoting the negotiation and ratification of the Optional Protocol to the CRC on a Communications Procedure, providing more guarantees for children's rights to help make them a reality for every child.

Ambassador Laura Dupuy

Director General for Technical and Administrative affairs Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Uruguay
President of the Human Rights Council (2011–2012)

Introduction



Dear colleagues and friends of Child Rights Connect,

Our 31 years of service at the forefront of the global effort to advance children's rights at the international level have been rewarding. Looking back over the past year and forward to the future, it is clear that Child Rights Connect has and will continue to be "a global voice for children's rights".

As one of the world's largest child rights networks, representing 82 organisations and reaching over 270 million children in more than 175 countries, the success of the work of Child Rights Connect is largely due to our capacity to collaborate with many types of actors across the globe. Indeed, we need to work together both for and with children to better respect their rights and develop opportunities for them to participate in a meaningful, safe and ethical manner.

Looking back, this year there have been many successes, as you will see in this report. Here are just two highlights:

- Having been instrumental in drafting the Optional Protocol to the CRC on a Communications Procedure (OP3CRC) and the ratification campaign, this new treaty entered into force on 14 April 2014. This represents a significant milestone for children's access to justice. For the first time, children or their representatives will be able to bring violations of their rights directly before the Committee on the Rights of the Child if no national legal remedy has been found. The protocol will act both as an instrument for children to claim their rights and as a tool for States to put in place the necessary national mechanisms to address violations.
- The 25th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (20 November 2014) was an opportunity not only to reflect on children's rights over the last quarter of a century, but also to renew commitments to children. To ensure this message was strong around the world, we actively participated in several initiatives including the organisation of the Committee's virtual event with children to discuss their rights and the high-level event at the UN headquarters in New York. In Geneva, the capital of children's rights, we took the lead on organising an event to mark the occasion. Our event brought together more than 200 people – including the UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights, members of the Committee, representatives from UNICEF and other UN agencies, diplomats, and civil society leaders – to strengthen collaboration on issues that affect children every day.

As we look forward to the future, we are eager to start implementing our new strategic plan for 2015–2019. It builds on our past achievements and sets out a framework for how we can maximise our impact on the child rights agenda. Our new objectives provide a comprehensive approach, namely through:

1. Connecting national-level actors, including children, to the work of the Committee on the Rights of the Child.
2. Integrating children's rights into the broader UN human rights system.
3. Using the Optional Protocol on a Communications Procedure to seek redress for children's rights violations.
4. Ensuring children's views are taken into account to advance their rights at national, regional and international levels.

By continuing to connect the daily realities of children's lives to the UN system, through collaboration with national and regional partners, including children, we aim to ensure that this system remains relevant and makes real advances for children's rights, as it was established to do.

After six years on the Executive Committee, I am finishing my third and final term. I would like to take this opportunity to extend my deepest gratitude to my fellow Executive Committee members, both past and present, and to all Secretariat staff members for their professional and dedicated efforts to promote children's rights globally.

Finally, I'd like to thank all our donors for their continued support in 2014, which has enabled us not only to carry out the important activities outlined in this report, but also to continue working with and for children to make their rights a reality.

Anne-Sophie Lois

President
Child Rights Connect

A powerful tool for change

25 years of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

Twenty-five years after its adoption, where the international community committed to promoting and protecting *all* the rights of *all* children, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) has become the most ratified UN human rights treaty. The CRC and its Optional Protocols¹ cover the rights of one of the largest disenfranchised group of individuals in any society – children. In addition to providing the foundations for improving the situations faced by children around the world, the CRC reporting cycle is an opportunity for UN human rights experts to conduct a regular review of the States parties. These reviews are particularly valuable to pave the way to improve the situation faced by children, especially for States with particular challenges, such as sensitive political situations, limited resources or fragile contexts like armed conflict or natural disasters.

Having examined reports from 191 of 195 States parties to the CRC, the Committee on the Rights of the Child (the Committee) has reviewed more States than any other treaty body. However, despite the apparent political will to promote and protect children's rights, millions of violations continue to occur on a daily basis. If children are to be recognised and treated as rights-holders, much remains to be done to change how the world views and treats them.

Having played such a significant role in the drafting, monitoring and/or implementation of the CRC and its Optional Protocols, Child Rights Connect seized the opportunity of the anniversary to increase the visibility of children's rights, mobilise key stakeholders, forge new partnerships and encourage States to renew their commitments to children.

The Committee talks to children from around the globe to mark the anniversary

Who best to take stock of 25 years of the CRC than the UN body of experts that has examined the state of the world's children in 191 countries and the rights-holders themselves?

As part of its many initiatives to engage directly with children, the Committee decided to talk to children from around the world as its main event to mark the anniversary. The Committee held four online conversations in three languages with 28 children from Australia, Belgium, Dominican Republic, Gambia, Japan, Lebanon, Nepal, Peru, Philippines, Tanzania, Tunisia, Turkey, Uruguay and Yemen. In these series of live conversations, the Committee not only heard about the human rights challenges these children face, but also their hopes and concerns for the future. In addition, the Committee called on children from around the world to share their thoughts on their rights by sending information in various formats, including videos, essays, poems and photos. This virtual discussion built on the first one which the Committee took part in on OP3 CRC with Child Rights Connect in 2013 and paved the way for future discussions of this type.

By integrating information and communication

¹ The Optional Protocols are the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (OPSC), the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflicts (OPAC) and the Optional Protocol on a Communications Procedure (OP3 CRC).

... we must ensure that the Convention on the Rights of the Child keeps pace with the young people it was designed for.

It must evolve with them and with the generations to come in order to create both a present and future that honour the standards we agreed on and the goals we set out to achieve 25 years ago.

KIRSTEN SANDBERG

CHAIR OF THE UN COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD



© UN PHOTO/AMANDA VOISARD

technologies into its work, the Committee transcended the financial and geographical barriers, which can make it impossible for them to interact directly with children from certain parts of the world. Alongside the direct conversation with children online, others could view the dialogue or even send questions and comments via social media. This was a significant step to make the Committee's work more visible, accessible and a move to increasingly integrate UN treaties into people's lives.

As the main link between the Committee and civil

society, including child advocates, Child Rights Connect, UNICEF and other NGOs assisted the Committee to identify groups of children from different regions of the world who were already involved in advocating for their rights. We supported the Committee and the OHCHR communications team to prepare the children and coordinate the conversations on the day of the virtual event. We also provided administrative support for the Committee to hire a consultant to aid in the planning process. Following the live conversations, the Committee produced a video on the key points raised during the day and in other children's submission, which we featured in our event in Geneva (see page 2). We also hosted the video on our website along with other submissions which children from around the globe sent the Committee in order to make these children's views on their rights easily accessible to all.

Bringing the CRC@25 celebration to the UN capital cities

To mark the occasion of the anniversary in the two international capitals of the CRC – Geneva and New York – Child Rights Connect co-organised events in both cities on the 20th of November, 25 years to the day after the CRC was adopted.

The first event was the UN General Assembly's high-level session on the 25th anniversary of the CRC during its 69th session. Child Rights Connect joined UNICEF and New York-based NGOs in supporting the organisation of the event by proposing suggestions for the format and topics to be discussed and releasing a joint statement to mark the event. We also encouraged our members to propose panellists for the event, including children, and worked with the planning group to select civil society leaders and child advocates.

To mark the occasion in Geneva, where the CRC was drafted, we organised an event with our members Defence for Children International, ECPAT Interna-

tional, International Movement "ATD Fourth World", Plan International, Red Latino Americana y Caribeña por la Defensa de los Derechos de los Niños, Niñas y Adolescentes (RedLAMYC), Save the Children International, Terre des Hommes International Federation, along with our partners the Committee on the Rights of the Child, UNICEF, the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the city, republic and canton of Geneva and the Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations. We sought to reach out to human rights and development professionals, diplomats, and all those who work on issues concerning children, to provide an opportunity for networking, reflection and forging new partnerships. This high-level event took place at the Palais Wilson in Geneva, the heart of the UN human rights system. It was attended by over 200 people, who joined our call for continued and strengthened collaboration in the future to ensure that children can fully enjoy their rights.

The Committee's video of its dialogue with the children was shown as part of the celebration to bring children's views to the attention of all those attending. Throughout the processes to organise the New York and Geneva events, Child Rights Connect liaised with the Committee to inform them on key issues and developments and allowed them to make the most out of their participation in both celebrations.

Calling for universal ratification and renewed commitment to children

The 25th anniversary was an ideal chance for States to show their commitment to children in their jurisdiction by ratifying and lifting all reservations to the CRC and its Optional Protocols. As part of our ongoing call for all States to ratify the CRC and its three Optional Protocols or lift reservations, we sent advocacy letters in July and December to all of the UN permanent missions in New York.

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Child Rights Connect exhibition on the history of children's rights in Geneva and New York at our CRC 25th anniversary event.

© OHCHR/DANIELLE KIRBY



Diplomats, experts and representatives from the UN and civil society gather to celebrate the CRC's 25th anniversary in Geneva.

Putting CRC@25 on the map to highlight initiatives around the world

Events were organised the world over to mark the CRC's anniversary. To show this global mobilisation around children's rights and increase the visibility of all these events, we set up a map and calendar on our website.



It allowed our members to sign in and share information about their plans to celebrate the anniversary. Our page provided detailed information on 90 conferences, celebrations and activities organised by our members and partners in all regions of the world. It was accessed by over 1,300 people and demonstrated the broad reach of our network.

CRC@25 map showing events around the world

This letter campaign reinforced our on-going advocacy to States in the Universal Periodic Review (see page 14), encouraging States to guarantee the full range of rights to children in these four UN child rights treaties.

By December 2014, several States did take advantage of the anniversary year. There were 8 new ratifications and 2 signatures: the State of Palestine ratified the CRC; the Democratic People's Republic of Korea

and Haiti ratified the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (OPSC); Dominican Republic and Guinea-Bissau ratified the Optional Protocol on Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (OPAC); and Andorra, Ireland, and Monaco (accession) became States parties to the Optional Protocol on a Communications Procedure (OP3CRC). Two States, France and Ukraine, signed the OP3CRC committing to ratifying the protocol soon.

Linking the daily realities of children to the work of the CRC

When provided with reliable and relevant information from different sources, the Committee is able to make more concrete and effective recommendations to States on how to increasingly guarantee the rights defined in the CRC and its Optional Protocols. To have an accurate picture of the impact of State initiatives on children, it is essential for the Committee to have the perspective of a variety of national actors, including NGOs, National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), UN agencies and children themselves. These actors are best placed to monitor the effectiveness of a State's measures to protect children's rights and to suggest solutions to improve the daily realities of children in line with the treaties.

Child Rights Connect is the link between the Committee and independent NGOs, national child rights coalitions, NHRIs and children from around the world. We ensure that the Committee receives reliable, relevant and timely reports from these national actors and international NGOs for the majority of States under review. We do this by providing regular information on the reporting cycle, webcasting sessions and Committee events to make them accessible, building capacity through online technical support and trainings, and providing logistical and financial support for national civil society representatives to meet with the Committee in Geneva. In so doing, we make the Committee's reporting cycle easily accessible to civil society actors. By using the skills and good practices learnt from the support and training provided by Child Rights Connect, national coalitions, NGOs, NHRIs and child-led organisations are more effective in their advocacy at the UN and in-country and ultimately in advancing the rights of the children.

Beyond our work with the reporting cycle, we collaborate closely with the Committee to support them in other activities that provide a better understanding of the rights included in the CRC and its Optional Protocols. We assist the Committee in activities, like Days of General Discussion and General Comments, on both substance and logistics. We also ensure that civil society actors with relevant expertise are informed and empowered to engage with the Committee in these other areas of work. Through various forms of participation, such as by submitting written materials and acting panellists during events, civil society actors enrich the understanding on topics that affect children globally.

Mobilising and strengthening national advocates

Comprehensive reporting and follow-up on the CRC

Ensuring that NGOs, national children's rights coalitions, and increasingly NHRIs and children, are empowered to participate in the reporting cycle is central to our work. Our support follows the entire process from reaching out to these civil society actors to inform them about the opportunity to engage in the Committee's work, to sending them the Committee's concluding observations, and providing guidance on how to use these recommendations in their daily work. By emphasising the cyclical nature of reporting to the Committee, we support these civil society actors in using the recommendations to advance children's rights in their countries.

We tailored our support to their needs. It ranged from alerting them to the upcoming review of their State; explaining how the reporting process works; and providing information, practical guides or training on drafting alternative reports; to giving comments on the format of their reports to ensure they are pre-

sented in the most useful way to the Committee. We then supported them to come to Geneva to attend the Committee's pre-session, a meeting where the Committee talks to non-State actors about the key issues in the States under review, and attend the Committee's session with the State.

In 2014, Child Rights Connect transmitted alternative reports from all these actors for 98% of the States reviewed. We also provided technical and logistical support to 249 NGO representatives to participate in the pre-sessional working group and sessions of the Committee. We briefed all the participants to prepare for their pre-sessions and offered assistance during the meetings with the Committee. We provided special briefings for children who had submitted reports and their chaperones, in advance of their 'children's meeting' with the Committee. These were conducted both virtually before they arrived and in person in Geneva (see page 19). We also provided financial support to NGO representatives based in the "Global South", and Central and Eastern Europe to travel to Geneva for the pre-session and session. Without this financial support, many of these national actors would not be able to travel to Geneva and meet

Number of participants who received logistical and/or financial support

In 2014, Child Rights Connect provided logistical, technical and financial support to 249 NGO representatives and children to participate in the CRC pre-sessions and session in Geneva.

Number of participants supported logistically and technically: 178 NGO representatives



Number of participants supported financially as well as logistically and technically, including 14 participants reporting on OPAC and OPSC and 16 children: 71 NGO representatives



Countries for which Child Rights Connect provided only logistical and technical support:

Ethiopia, Germany, Holy See, Netherlands, Portugal, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkmenistan, United Kingdom, Yemen

Countries for which Child Rights Connect provided financial, logistical and technical support:

Cambodia, Colombia, Congo, Croatia, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Gambia, Ghana, Honduras, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Jamaica, Jordan, Kyrgyzstan, Mauritius, Mexico, Morocco, Nepal, Russia, Tanzania, Uruguay, Venezuela

States examined in the 2014 CRC pre-session and sessions

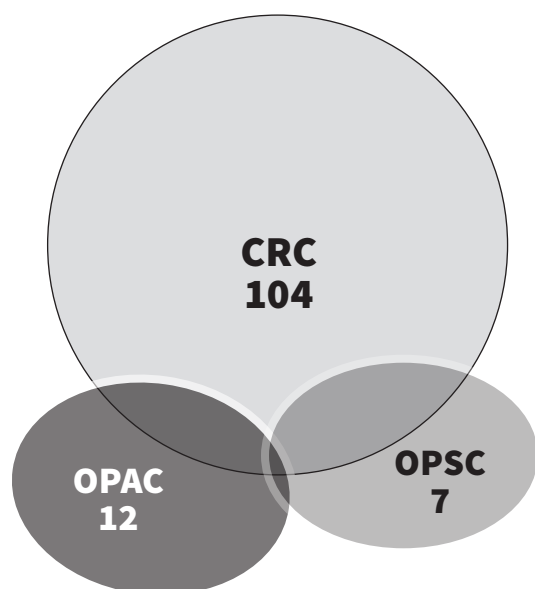
CRC 21 Reports	OPAC 17 Reports	OPSC 13 Reports	Integrated CRC 10 reports
Congo	Cambodia	Cambodia	Colombia (OPSC&OPAC)
Dominican Republic	Cuba	Germany	Croatia (OPAC)
Ethiopia	Holy See	Holy See	Germany (OPAC)
Fiji	Honduras	Honduras	Kyrgyzstan (OPSC)
Gambia	Hungary	Hungary	Mexico (OPSC&OPAC)
Ghana	India	India	Morocco (OPSC)
Holy See	Jordan	Jordan	Nepal (OPSC)
Hungary	Morocco	Portugal	Netherlands (OPSC)
India	Nepal	Switzerland	Sweden (OPSC&OPAC)
Indonesia	Netherlands	Turkmenistan	Switzerland (OPAC)
Jamaica	Portugal	United Kingdom	
Jordan	Russia	Uruguay	
Mauritius	Singapore	Venezuela	
Portugal	Turkmenistan		
Russia	Uruguay		
St. Lucia	Venezuela		
Tanzania	Yemen		
Turkmenistan			
Uruguay			
Venezuela			
Yemen			

Child Rights Connect has been a key partner to the Mauritian NGOs, supporting them to monitor and report child rights abuses in the country ... the *Kolektif* looks forward to building upon salient issues and questions raised by the Committee to enable a collaboration between the State and civil society to further strengthen and reinforce all pertaining issues in regards to children protection and rights.



MÉLANIE VIGIER DE LATOUR-BÉRENGER
ON BEHALF OF THE COALITION
KOLEKTIF DWRA ZANFAN MORISIEN

Child Rights Connect received and transmitted alternative reports from 98 % of countries that participated in the session or pre-session in 2014



Total reports	123
.....
CRC reports	104
.....
Integrated CRC/OPSC reports	4
.....
Integrated CRC/OPAC reports	1
.....
Integrated CRC/OPAC/OPSC reports	1
.....
OPAC reports	12
.....
OPSC reports	7
.....

with the Committee directly, due to the high costs. These meetings are essential for the Committee, as they provide an opportunity to discuss the key child rights issues in preparation for the dialogue with the State. This is especially valuable for States that do not have comprehensive data on the whole country, for instance due to federal government systems, geographical challenges, conflicts or insufficient resources.

Through continued mobilisation of these national civil society actors around the work of the Committee, NGOs, NHRIs and children become stronger advocates for changes in State legislation, policies and programmes to advance children’s rights at home.

Debating children’s rights in the digital age

The Committee’s 2014 Day of General Discussion (DGD) provided an opportunity for experts, NGOs, UN representatives, States and academics to discuss “digital media and children’s rights”. This important and multi-faceted theme needed to be addressed, especially given the increasing presence and impact of digital media on children around the globe, both in terms of its potential and risks. Child Rights Connect was involved in supporting the Committee to organise the event. We met regularly with the Committee, its Secretariat and UNICEF to organise the day, contributed to the concept note and proposed expert speakers. To further support the preparation, we provided administrative assistance for the Committee to hire a consultant and ensure interpretation in the two working groups.

To make sure that information about how children are using digital media in all parts of the world was available, we sought participation from civil society experts and practitioners from every region. Through email, social media and our website, we reached out to our network of members and partners at international, regional and national levels. Several of our members actively participated in the event, submitting written materials, contributing to discussions and leading sections during the side events.

Child Rights Connect also provided financial support for a civil society expert from Latin America to be a panellist for the session on children’s empowerment and engagement through digital media and ICTs. She provided insight on work being done with children in the region to empower them to become “digital citizens” and use communications technologies in a responsible, intelligent and equitable way.

Given the topic, the Committee asked children to participate in the DGD through online submissions and social media. Child Rights Connect broadly dis-

seminated the information about how to participate throughout our network of members and partners. As with the 25th anniversary of the CRC, we provided a dedicated space on our website to showcase the information submitted by children, including reports, photos, essays, and videos.

To make the discussions as accessible as possible to a wide audience, Child Rights Connect webcasted the sessions of the DGD and live tweeted highlights of the discussion using the hashtag #DGD2014. We also set up an instagram photo message gallery where we invited Committee members and the participants to share their thoughts about important points of the day. The photos were featured on OHCHR's storify page which gathered interesting social media content about the discussion.

In early 2015, the Committee will release their summary of the DGD and recommendations about digital media and children's rights, which we will disseminate broadly. The report serves as a reference of the day, and the suggestions made can be incorporated into NGO's advocacy around this issue.

General Comments for better understanding

To strengthen the understanding and implementation of the CRC, the Committee develops General Comments on specific provisions or cross-cutting themes. In 2014, the Committee was working on the different stages of four General Comments on the following topics: adolescents, investment in children, children in street situations and a joint one with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women on harmful practices. The latter was

The Day of General Discussion allowed me to gain cutting edge knowledge from the whole world, especially the northern hemisphere – sometimes so distant from our countries.

I am grateful to Child Rights Connect for giving me the possibility to take part in this event and hope that this is just the beginning of spaces for collaboration and interaction.

MARCELA CZARNY, PRESIDENT
LATIN AMERICA NETWORK OF CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS ON ICTS / CHICOS.NET



the first General Comment drafted by two treaty bodies.

Child Rights Connect worked closely with the Committee in developing its General Comments. This included raising awareness of civil society, especially those who have expertise in the area covered by the General Comment, about the Committee's calls for submissions to develop the scope, attending expert meetings and developing drafts of General Comments. Our involvement varied according to the different processes, the stage in the drafting process and the expertise of our members and/or Secretariat on the theme. In 2014, we were the lead partner for the one on investment, provided comments on the final draft

AFTER THE DGD: PROMOTING THE RIGHTS OF CHILDREN OF INCARCERATED PARENTS

Building on the success of the 2011 Day of General Discussion, which focused on children with incarcerated parents, our Working Group strategically engages with the CRC, HRC and UPR to make sure this issue is widely addressed at international level. The Working Group reached out to mobilise more than 80 NGOs around the world to engage in national, regional and international advocacy. They also worked directly with high-level partners like the SRSG on Violence against Children as well as experts such as members of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child.

Over the course of 2014, the **Working Group on Children of Incarcerated Parents** worked hard to maintain the issue on the global agenda. They provided inputs on HRC resolutions, sent information to the CRC, UPR and other special procedures mandates as well as to regional mechanisms, organised side events, and took part in the campaign for the new UN Global Study on Children deprived of Liberty. Through direct and indirect influence of the Working Group, the issue of children of incarcerated parents was included in many regional and international outputs including CRC and UPR recommendations, the OHCHR's Management Plan for 2014–2017, the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child's first General Comment, the Secretary General's Report on "Questions of the Death Penalty", the UN General Assembly's 2014 resolution on the rights of the child.

"States that use the death penalty also need to consider how to address the consequences of its use on society at large, in particular on the families of individuals sentenced to death or executed."

Zaved Mahmood, Human Rights Officer, OHCHR

on harmful practices, were involved in initial discussions on the scope of the ones on children in street situations and adolescents and identifying key actors to involve. Throughout these processes, we provided interested members and partners from around the world with updates on opportunities to engage, the drafting processes, the launch of final General Comments and how they can be used in their work.

This year we have put particular focus on safe, ethical and meaningful child participation in the GC drafting process. Along with our informal Working Group on Investment in Children and the Centre for Children's Rights, at Queens University Belfast, we piloted a process to collect children's views from every region of the world about how governments spend money on issues that affect them. This consultation with more than 2,650 children will also influence the 2015 Annual Day on the Rights of the Child themed "towards better investment in children" (see page 20).

Elections for a strong and balanced Committee

As the treaty body system can only be as effective as the members who represent it, we reached out to States and NGOs for the nomination and election of the most qualified experts for the membership of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. At the same

CRC Accountability Consultation

As part of the Global Resource Group for Accountability to Child Rights and Wellbeing, Child Rights Connect joined the Committee, UNICEF and the CRC Accountability Focal Group to build capacities and strategise for strong working methods. During the day-long capacity building session the resource group began developing a comprehensive set of indicators geared toward States to use as a framework for their periodic reports on the CRC and its OPs. This could potentially be used to facilitate the process for States to create useful and thorough reports so that the Committee is gains a full understanding of the child rights situation during its review.

Child Rights Connect's support of the Committee in drafting General Comments, including securing funding for consultations with children, organising consultations with experts and mobilising its network to engage in our work and projects, has been invaluable.



JORGE CARDONA
MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

time, we continued advocating for elections to be a priority in the treaty body strengthening process through discussions with States, OHCHR and NGOs working closely with the other treaty bodies (see page 15).

While elections usually happen in December, in 2014 they were brought forward to June, providing less time for us to raise awareness about the elections and less time for States and NGOs to identify and/or nominate candidates. One of the consequences was that only 13 candidates were running for election, one of the lowest rates in years.

Despite the time constraints, we promoted a high and diverse level of expertise, regional and gender balance, experience on working with a broad range of stakeholders and other key criteria, for the nominees. We contacted States and NGOs, and followed up closely with underrepresented regions, including Sub-Saharan Africa and Asia, to encourage the nomination and election of experts. We also collected the feedback from national actors about the candidates and shared it with States that were interested in receiving this perspective.

The new Committee members, who will start their mandate in March 2015, are from Morocco, Samoa, Togo and Venezuela. We look forward to developing positive working relations with them and continuing our support of the Committee in its work.

Building capacities to connect with the international system

Training and motivating civil society actors to promote children's rights at home and in the UN

An essential component of our work is to provide NGOs with the knowledge and practical tools to effectively use the UN human rights system to improve the children's rights situation in their countries. Thanks to our long experience and close working relationships with key international bodies, we are able to design trainings that are specifically tailored to the needs of each audience. We aim both to improve civil society understanding of the UN human rights system and provide best practices on how working at international level can strengthen advocacy activities at home.

Over the course of 2014, Child Rights Connect organised, led and participated in meetings, conferences and trainings in Geneva as well as in country. To maximise our outreach, we not only carry out trainings in person, but increasingly through webinars and online forums, allowing us to reach out to a greater number of people in a cost effective, time efficient and environmentally conscious way.

In 2014, Child Rights Connect led or participated in trainings and workshops with more than 400 participants from over 70 countries.

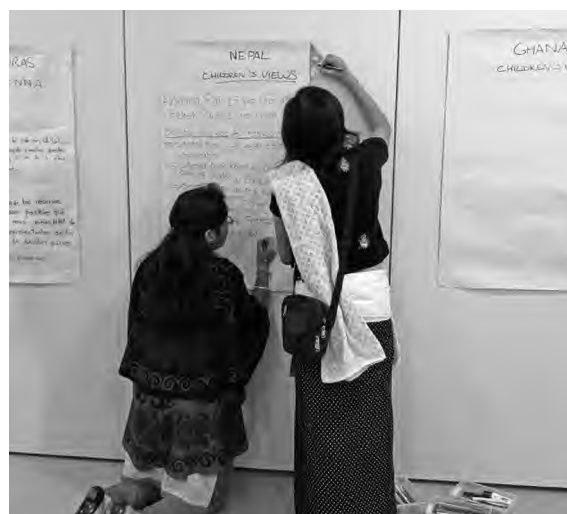
Best Practice Exchange Forums

At every Committee pre-session, we organise a forum for all the NGO participants to learn from each other's achievements and challenges, as well as to strategise on the follow-up to their CRC review and how to use other mechanisms such as UPR. These forums give national children's rights professionals from different regions the rare chance to interact and share with others who are at the same stage of the CRC reporting cycle. In 2014, we brought together more than 100 participants from 20 countries.

The forums combine a training component from Child Rights Connect and other experts with an exchange of best practices and experiences from participants. Through small group activities and plenary sessions, participants reflected on their engagement with the Committee and shared challenges and successes from their processes.

We also gathered the information shared by participants about the reporting cycle and plans for follow-up to continue producing our collection of case studies. These national examples are an invaluable resource for others to learn from them and for our future support of civil society engagement with UN processes.

As there were many children in Geneva to meet with the Committee in 2014, we held parallel forums for them to reinforce their knowledge of CRC reporting and their capacity to use it as an advocacy tool at national level. We also focused on raising their awareness on the Committee's child participation standards and sought their views on how those standards were applied in their experiences. After each forum,



NGO participants brainstorm ideas for national-level follow-up to their meetings with the CRC at our Best Practice Exchange Forum.

we supported participants to prepare for the session with their States and provided practical advice about the opportunities for engagement with other UN bodies.

Building coalitions' capacities in Central and Eastern Europe

Child Rights Connect took an active role in the 7th regional meeting for child rights coalitions in Europe. We were part of the planning committee in cooperation with the Bulgarian national coalition, Eurochild and ChildPact. The meeting gathered more than 80 participants from 33 countries, mainly from Central and Eastern Europe. Many coalitions from this area



Ilaria Paolazzi, Child Rights Officer, leading a brainstorming session at the regional child rights coalition meeting in Sofia, Bulgaria.

are newly formed or have limited capacity and, therefore, can benefit greatly from training on how to work with the CRC and other UN mechanisms to bolster their advocacy efforts at national level.

Four members of our Secretariat led plenary sessions, group discussions and practical workshops on the CRC reporting cycle; the OP3 CRC; safe, ethical and meaningful child participation in international systems; the UPR; and good communications practices for children's rights NGOs. We also discussed the protection of the family agenda (see page 12) and looked at ways to address it both at national and international level, given its importance in the region.

The conference was an excellent opportunity to reinforce and make new contacts with coalitions that have limited capacity to report on the CRC, especially those in the region interested in campaigning for OP3 CRC ratification, and strengthen our collaboration with regional networks, like ChildPact.

Promoting OP3 CRC in Africa

With the entry into force of the third Optional Protocol to the CRC (see page 16), Child Rights Connect focused on building capacities and awareness on the OP in



Panellists at the "Access to Justice for Children in Africa" conference.

Eastern and Southern Africa, which was identified as a priority region by the Ratify OP3 CRC International Coalition. Child Rights Connect co-organised and participated in the International Coalitions's "Access to Justice for Children in Africa" conference held in Addis-Ababa, Ethiopia.

Due to our involvement in the promotion of the OP3 CRC since its drafting, Child Right Connect was in a unique position to give participants in-depth understanding of the treaty including its added value to national and regional justice systems. During the conference, which brought together States, NHRIs, NGOs, and academia, we also raised awareness about ratification campaigns at national level, practical tools and best practices.

More than 70 participants attended the conference from 11 countries of Eastern and Southern Africa: Burundi, Kenya, Malawi, Mozambique, Rwanda, Sudan, South Africa, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe.

Sharing expertise on the UN human rights system

Some of our 2014 trainings, workshops and conferences include:

- **Intermedia Social Innovation's Human Rights training** – 29 participants the law, medical human rights and business sectors.
- **Advancing Children's Rights through the UN: an NGO Perspective** – 2 trainings in June and October for coordinators from our member organisation, Edmund Rice. Participants from Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe, North and South America
- **Capacity-building workshop on CRC reporting in Lithuania** – 14 participants from the Lithuanian child rights coalition on how to engage in the CRC reporting process.
- **Introduction to UN human Rights Systems and Civil Society** – 15 students from the University of Padua in Italy
- **Summer School on Child Rights at University of Nottingham** – Workshop for 25 representatives of NGOs, NHRIs, UN agencies and academia on advancing child rights through the UN
- **Advocacy for Ratification Webinar** – Online seminar with 12 child rights professionals from NGOs and UN agencies
- **Child Rights-Based Evaluation Education and Training at Queen's University Belfast**



Moving children up on the human rights agenda

As part of our comprehensive approach to the implementation of the CRC and its Optional Protocols, we focused on integrating a children's rights perspective into strategic mechanisms or processes of the broader human rights system, particularly the Human Rights Council (HRC) and its Universal Periodic Review (UPR). We did this through a range of activities such as leading the organisation of UN panels and delivering oral statements, participating in HRC side events, taking part in the drafting or negotiations of resolutions, coordinating activities of our members engaging with the HRC and UPR and acting as the main voice representing the child rights perspective in the treaty body strengthening process.

Human Rights Council

2014 saw many opportunities and some serious threats for children's rights at the Council. Both our Secretariat and thematic Working Groups, which are composed of our members, made considerable headway in strengthening the framework for children's rights in the HRC by being at the forefront of initiatives, such as the 2014 and 2015 annual days on the rights of the child on "access to justice for children" and "towards better investment in the rights of the child". We provided inputs to resolutions, such as the one on the right to play and leisure, and brought attention to the need for more effective child participation at the international level, through side events and statements during relevant panels and meetings.

Our coordinated efforts both with international NGOs in Geneva and with national-level members and partners allowed us to counter controversial initiatives that could have a detrimental effect on children's rights, such as the resolution on the protection of the family and related panel. These activities exemplify our strength as a network, as the coordination of our advocacy enables us to cover many child rights issues and our multi-level strategy to use all relevant entry points to achieve our objectives. Further integrating children's rights into the UN system is an area which we continue to develop. We will increase outreach to the Special Procedures mandate holders and other treaty bodies during the new strategic period.

Using UN side events to influence the international framework for children's rights

25th session of the HRC – March 2014:

- Roisin Fegan, Interim Director, was a panellist at the event entitled "25th Anniversary of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child" and discussed "The CRC and its article 12 in the eyes of Civil Society".
- Anita Goh, Advocacy Officer, moderated the event organised by the Ratify OP3 CRC International Coalition entitled "Making Children's Access to Justice a Reality: the Third Optional Protocol to the UN CRC".
- Alan Kikuchi-White, President, delivered opening comments at the launch of the photo exhibition "The Right to Smile/Realizing children's rights around the world".

19th session of the UPR – May 2014:

- Lisa Myers, Director, was a panellist at the event entitled "Advancing children's rights through the Universal Periodic Review – Achievements, challenges and lessons learned" and shared experiences on "The complementarity between the UPR and the UNCRC monitoring processes".

27th session of the HRC – September 2014:

- Lisa Myers, Director, was a panellist at the event entitled "Empowering children and young people to know their rights" and provided an "overview of ways in which children can have their views heard in different national and international processes".
- Anita Goh, Advocacy Officer, summarised and delivered the concluding remarks of the event entitled "Towards better spending to realize children's rights", organised by the informal Working Group on Investment in Children in view of the 2015 Annual Day on the Rights of the Child.
- The Secretariat led the organisation of a side event on "The rights of the child in family environments" to address the negative effects the resolution on the protection of the family could have on children.

Protecting the rights of children as individuals in diverse family settings

Throughout the year, our Secretariat was at the pulse of the development of initiatives surrounding the “protection of the family” in the Council, which resulted in a resolution and a subsequent panel discussion. These initiatives sought to introduce the idea that the family, understood as the nuclear family, has rights as a unit, without acknowledging several key points such as: the human rights of individual family members such as children; the different forms a family can take; and States’ responsibility to protect the rights of individuals and intervene, when appropriate. The initiatives were largely interpreted by States and civil society as both a backlash to the progress made in the HRC regarding the protection of the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender persons and a continuation of the discussion on traditional values and human rights. Besides the big step back these initiatives could mean for children’s rights, they were also used by some NGOs to question the CRC and its recognition of children as individual human rights holders, as well as to call States to make parental rights prevail over children’s rights.

To counter these attacks, Child Rights Connect coordinated advocacy activities of both members and partners, in close collaboration with other human rights NGOs, UN agencies, UN experts and States, at international and national levels. Thanks to this approach, a wide spectrum of actors joined forces against these initiatives and spoke with one voice to defend children’s rights. We strategically used the general commitment to children’s rights to provide key arguments grounded on a child rights approach both to “friendly” States and partners and also to States supporting the initiatives. Our strategy and arguments offered an alternative, more consensual angle, which was effective to find constructive compromises during the negotiation of the resolution and also to reaffirm children’s rights during the discussions on protection of the family at the subsequent HRC panel. As a result, a number of States and human rights experts brought up CRC stand-

Child Rights Connect is uniquely and crucially positioned as the children’s rights linkage between national organisations and the UN human rights system. An example of this was their role in 2014



in presenting the views of children’s rights organisations on the protection of the family to the UN Human Rights Council. Child Rights Connect ensured that national organisations were consulted – without this intervention we would not have had the opportunity to have had our voices represented.

EDEL QUINN
SENIOR LEGAL AND POLICY OFFICER,
CHILDREN’S RIGHTS ALLIANCE, IRELAND.

-ards and requested the inclusion of a child rights perspective in these initiatives both during the negotiations of the resolution and the panel itself.

Taking the lead in the HRC day on Access to Justice for Children

Since the creation of the HRC, Child Rights Connect has played a critical role in organising the Annual Full-day Meeting on the Rights of the Child and the corresponding resolution. This yearly event is an important time for UN bodies, States and NGOs alike to discuss pressing children’s rights issues.

For the first time, however, after having successfully advocated for the Council to discuss “Access to Justice for Children” in 2014, in part to keep up the momentum on the ratification of OP3 CRC (see page 16), our Secretariat took on the thematic lead role in organising the panel and providing inputs on the resolution. As a result, we had a significant influence

INTEGRATING CHILDREN’S RIGHTS IN DIFFERENT AREAS OF THE UN HUMAN RIGHTS SYSTEM

As part of their on-going work to ensure that the rights of children are taken into account more consistently in the broader UN human rights system, the **Working Group on Mainstreaming Children’s Rights** lobbied at the HRC and raised it with the new High Commissioner for Human Rights. In a meeting with the High Commissioner, the Working Group asked him to ensure that children and their rights are not only considered by the human rights bodies, but also in the development of standards and policies of the OHCHR. They developed a position paper and sent it to HRC Member States and a “mainstreaming Q&A” reference document to raise awareness about and answer key questions on this topic. The Working Group also lobbied for the annual panel on Human Rights Mainstreaming to focus on the human rights of children.

on the day and the resolution by advocating and providing language suggestions, including language to reflect children’s views, and coordinating our members to strategically support our work. This role grew the Secretariat’s expertise and subsequently enabled us to provide in-depth technical assistance to members leading on the 2015 annual day and resolution, both on how to engage to have maximum impact and what pitfalls to avoid.

A major innovation of the 2014 annual day, led by Child Rights Connect, was the inclusion of the views of 310 children from 24 countries on “access to justice”, which we gathered during consultations for the 2013 OHCHR report. The views were read by a Child Rights Connect staff member and displayed using a “Prezi”. This incorporated the voices and opinions of many children from different regions.

Continuing our strong stance urging the Council to take children’s views into account, we initiated discussions with members and States to formalise the inclusion of children’s views in the HRC ways that are safe, ethical and meaningful. Progress was made and children’s views will be included in the 2015 annual day, based on broad consultations conducted by our informal Working Group on Public Investment (see page 20).



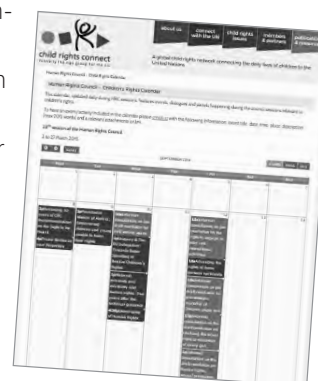
A “Prezi” to share the views of more than 300 children about how they access justice during the HRC Annual Day.

Looking ahead: seeking ways “towards better investment in children’s rights”

The realisation of children’s rights has resource implications, as they require laws and policies as well as appropriately-resourced systems and structures in place to implement them, as well as mechanisms to support children whose rights are violated. In 2014, two of our members, REDLAMYC and Save the Children were the driving force behind the advocacy that led to the selection of the theme “Towards better investment in children” for the 2015 Council’s annual day. The informal Working Group, assisted by the Child Rights Connect Secretariat has been instrumental in planning the annual day, including conducting a consultation with over 2,650 children.

All the HRC information on children’s rights, all in one place

The sessions of the Council are busy times for our Secretariat, members, and partners, managing ever changing schedules of panels, negotiations and side events. For the 27th session in September 2014, we piloted the first online calendar for all of the Council happenings relating to children’s rights, which was updated daily with information from members and partners, like UNICEF. The calendar



A GLOBAL FOCAL POINT ON CHILDREN AND VIOLENCE

Our **Working Group on Children and Violence** launched a global campaign, “Act Now- End Violence against Children” to advance the recommendations from the UN Global Study on Violence against Children. Throughout 2014, the Working Group worked closely with key partners like the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence against Children, OHCHR, UNICEF, and the World Health Organisation (WHO), as well as diplomatic missions from 5 regions, to bring this campaign to the forefront of the UN human rights agenda.

In HRC side events, oral statements, high-level panels, and negotiations on the resolutions, the Working Group promoted the recommendations from the Global Study within the broader human rights system. The Working Group continued to raise awareness within the UN and beyond by taking concrete steps, such as launching video and social media campaigns, to end violence against children.

“The most recent outcome document of the Open Working Group on Sustainable Development Goals includes violence against children as a stand-alone target as well as a cross-cutting concern. This is a gain we must preserve. For these reasons I warmly welcome and endorse the very timely initiative that the Working Group on Children and Violence is launching.”

Marta Santos Pais, Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence against Children

makes the HRC more accessible to children's rights NGOs in several ways: it helps coordinate their participation in the sessions by streamlining communication and eliminating the need for individual emails; it gives members hosting events or panels a chance to share information with other children's rights NGOs; and it allows NGOs not in Geneva to stay informed on what's going on in the Council concerning their priority issues.

Strengthening UPR's potential to reflect priority children's rights issues in all States

Throughout the year, our Secretariat coordinated the activities of member and partner NGOs that are actively involved in raising children's rights issues in the UPR, in order to ensure that priority children's rights issues are increasingly addressed during reviews. By organising efforts and providing a platform for members to share information using online documents and during meetings, the Secretariat enabled these organisations to identify new opportunities, potential overlapping activities or gaps in coverage, which led to stronger UPR advocacy as a network.

Our director, Lisa Myers, encouraged States to use the UPR more effectively to advance children's rights as a panellist in UN side event on that topic. In particular, she called on States to raise children's rights issues for States which have not ratified the CRC and/or all of its OPs and to call attention to priority issues in line with the Committee's Concluding Observations.

Using the UPR for a more comprehensive framework for children's rights

As part of our activities to strengthen international children's rights frameworks, we engaged in direct advocacy on the ratification of the CRC, OPSC and/or OPAC, the lifting of reservations to these treaties,

The UPR coordination meetings held by Child Rights Connect have been particularly useful in terms of information sharing and better coordination of our efforts. They allow us to identify opportunities for



joint advocacy, and also provide a unique space for sharing ideas and lessons learnt for mutual learning to strengthen our advocacy impact!

DIARRA DIOP

CHILD RIGHTS ADVOCACY ADVISOR, SAVE THE CHILDREN

and the submission of overdue reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. In 2014, these issues concerned 13 States under review: Brunei, Comoros, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Dominican Republic, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Fiji, the Gambia, Iran, Iraq, New Zealand, and Qatar. Thanks to our advocacy briefs disseminated to UN missions, our participation to UPR pre-sessions and the periodic exchanges of views with EU Human Rights experts on the UPR and bilateral meetings, 26 recommendations were taken up by States during the reviews, out of the 35 recommendations for which we were advocating. As a result, several States have committed to ratify child rights treaties before their next review in 4 ½ years: Côte d'Ivoire and Comoros, among others, have committed to ratify the OP3 CRC; Equatorial Guinea and Ethiopia have committed to ratify the OPAC; and Fiji has committed to ratify both the OPAC and OPSC.

To keep up the ratification momentum after the entry into force of the new Optional Protocol on a

MAKING CHILDREN'S RIGHTS "COUNT"

Our **Working Group on Universal Birth Registration** engaged with the Committee, the Council and its UPR to raise awareness about how birth registration and vital statistics play a crucial role on children's ability to enjoy their rights and access services. Working with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the Permanent Mission of Mexico, and the Norwegian Refugee Council, members of the Working Group produced a short film, "Register me!", looking at how to strengthen national systems to ensure universal birth registration. Through HRC side events and submissions to the Committee and UPR reviews of States, the Working Group engaged with UN experts, diplomats, and civil society to promote this issue in the UN human rights system.

"Civil registration and vital statistics has an impact on every stage of our lives. Birth registration is the first step towards the legal identity."

N. Panta, Plan International

GUIDELINES FOR CHILDREN WITHOUT PARENTAL CARE

The 25th anniversary of the CRC was not the only important children's rights event to commemorate in 2014; it was also the 5th anniversary of the UN Guidelines on Alternative Care, which set out international standards on the rights of children without or in risk of losing parental care. Our **Working Group on Children without Parental Care**, which has been instrumental both in the drafting of the guidelines and in their implementation, took this opportunity to make the Guidelines more visible and address priority issues, both within the UN system and in regions where they have been less used.

The Working Group identified Africa as a priority region for focused advocacy work. They began this process by submitting reports to African Committee of Experts on Rights and Welfare of the Child on situations faced by children without parental care in Ethiopia, Kenya and South Africa. By engaging with this regional mechanism, the Working Group hopes to integrate the UN Guidelines into the African system for stronger implementation.

To further promote better implementation and increase access to the Guidelines, the Working Group coordinated translation of their guide to implementation, *Moving Forward*, into 3 new languages: Chinese, German and Italian. The guide is now available in 7 languages. The Working Group also hosted several HRC side events in Geneva each attended by more than 100 participants.

Communications Procedure (see page 16) and provide an increasing number of children with access to this international complaints mechanism, we also encouraged the OP3 CRC States parties to systematically recommend States under review to ratify it. These States made 36 recommendations to sign or ratify OP3 CRC in 2014. To reinforce this call, we disseminated information about UPR recommendations on OP3 CRC to the International Coalition Ratify OP3 CRC to enable members based in those States to use them to strengthen their ratification campaign at national level.

Treaty Body Strengthening

2014 was a pivotal year for the treaty body strengthening process as the negotiations of the GA resolution drew to a clause. The adoption of the resolution "Strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system" (A/Res/68/268) in April led to a new implementation phase of this process, which could have a considerable impact on the work of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the reporting process as it has been for over two decades and how civil society can take part in it.

Having followed the treaty body strengthening process since the beginning as the main civil society voice representing children's rights, we continued to consistently provide our views either in individual or joint submissions and advocacy with other human rights NGOs to ensure that the measures proposed would ultimately benefit the rights holders. We took part in meetings with the Committee, OHCHR and human rights NGOs to discuss the implementation, including the Committees' Chairpersons meeting (June 2014). Our focus was on providing support for the Committee to meet in two chambers, and the extra NGOs and

children reporting to the Committee; advocating for the professionalisation of the webcasting to make the work of the treaty bodies more visible and accessible; and mobilising stakeholders around the nomination and election process of treaty body members.

A Simplified CRC Reporting Procedure

In September 2014, the Committee decided to implement the simplified reporting procedure starting in 2016. This decision was taken in the framework of the Committee's internal discussions on the implementation of the UN General Assembly resolution on "Strengthening and enhancing the effective functioning of the human rights treaty body system". In this resolution, human rights treaty bodies are encouraged to "offer to States parties for their consideration the simplified reporting procedure and to set a limit on the number of the questions included".

Following the Committee's decision, Child Rights Connect was asked to conduct baseline research on how best to implement the procedure for the CRC, OPSC and OPAC, taking into account the breadth of these treaties and the active participation of multiple stakeholders in the process. We presented the findings of this research to the Committee, highlighting the different issues which it would need to take into account to ensure that it maintains the strengths of the current reporting procedure, such as the confidentiality and the effectiveness of NGOs, UN agencies, NHRIs and children's participation. In addition, we carried out research to look at ways to strengthen the role of non-State actors in advocating for, or supporting, the follow-up to the Committee's recommendations. This implementation phase will be a key priority in coming years, as we strive to ensure that it truly strengthens the work of the Committee and its outputs for the rights holders.

A historic advancement for children to access justice

The entry into force of the OP3CRC

This was a historic year for children's ability to access justice as the third Optional Protocol to the CRC on a Communications Procedure came into force on 14 April. With this new treaty, children whose rights have been violated will be able to bring their cases to the United Nations if solutions cannot be found at national level. Before this, despite its near universal ratification, the CRC was the only international human rights treaty that had no mechanism for victims to seek justice internationally when they could not get redress for violations of their rights at national level.

For more than 5 years, Child Rights Connect has been a key advocate for the OP3 CRC, working closely with UN experts and States in the drafting process and then switching focus to establish Ratify OP3 CRC, an international coalition of NGOs leading a global campaign for its ratification and swift entry into force. Over the past year, 5 States – Andorra, Belgium, Costa Rica, Ireland and Monaco – ratified the OP3 CRC, bringing the total to 14 States that offer children access to the international system to address rights violations. Two more, France and Ukraine, signed the treaty, pledging to ratify soon, and Switzerland announced they were looking into ratification during the Child Rights Connect 25th CRC anniversary event.

Now that the OP3 CRC has entered into force, in addition to pushing for ratification, we also began setting the groundwork to support States, NGOs and legal practitioners to prepare for the first cases.

The entry into force of the third Optional Protocol to the CRC was a historic day for the realisation of children's rights worldwide. Ratify OP3CRC International Coalition – with Child Rights Connect as one of its most active members – played a crucial role in this process and continues to push States for ratification.



ANTJE WEBER
ADVOCACY OFFICER, KINDERNOTHILFE, AND STEERING
COMMITTEE CO-CHAIR, RATIFY OP3 CRC INTERNATIONAL
COALITION

Building momentum for the new treaty

Capitalising on the momentum built over the first two years of the ratification campaign, Child Rights Connect co-organised two events around the entry into force of OP3 CRC to encourage States to ratify the treaty and the first 10 States parties to champion it at international level.

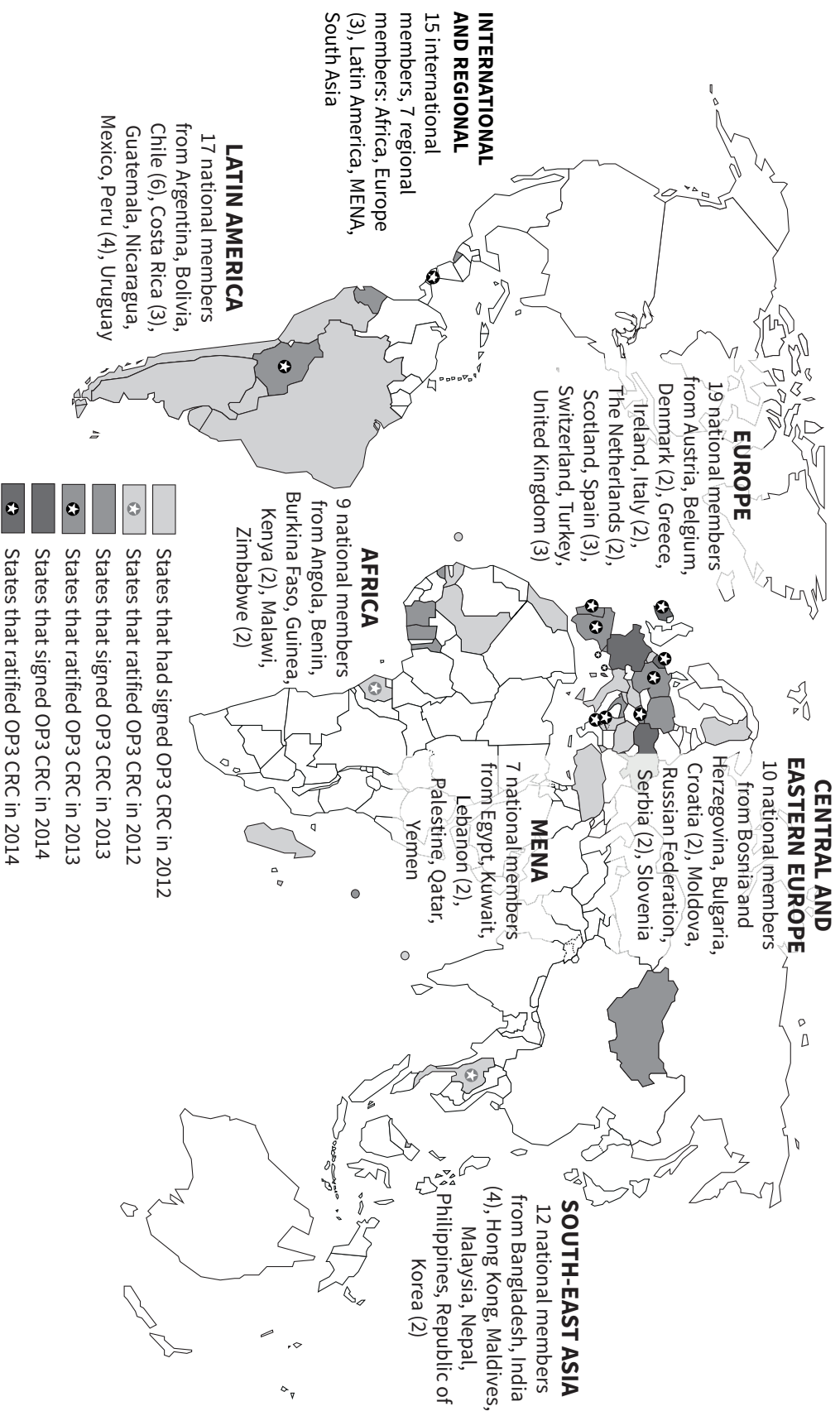
As the 2014 theme of the annual day coincided with the entry into force of OP3 CRC, we seized the opportunity to share reflections on the OP3 CRC's role in improving children's access to justice with States. Our Secretariat coordinated the International Coalition (see page 18) to deliver a joint statement during the day and organised a UN side event reflecting on the potential of OP3 CRC, with the co-sponsorship of 9 States parties to the treaty. In addition to raising awareness about OP3 CRC, the event served as a platform for UN experts, including a member of the Com-



The OP3 CRC States parties call for universal ratification at an event on the treaty's entry into force.

PROGRESS OF THE OP3 CRC RATIFICATION CAMPAIGN DURING 2014

Ratify OP3 CRC International Coalition is composed of 96 national, regional and international non-governmental organisational and networks, human rights institutions, and other non-governmental bodies from all regions. Member regions and countries are shown in lists on this map.



mittee and the former Chairperson of the UN Working Group that drafted it, to discuss how OP3 CRC will improve children's access to justice at national and international levels. It also gave an opportunity to States parties to explain their reasons for ratifying to others, and the International Coalition to share examples of how civil society and children could assist States in their ratification processes. The event was attended by over 80 participants from States, NHRIs, International agencies and NGOs.

On the date of its entry into force, 9 States parties held the first event led by States on the new OP. During the event, which was co-sponsored by the International Coalition, States took up the calls we had made for them to encourage other States to ratify and show their commitment to children's rights. This peer-to-peer discussion between States added weight and visibility to our campaign. It was an effective way to engage States parties call for others to ratify this treaty.

Finding “New Tactics” to improve children’s access to justice

Child Rights Connect collaborated with New Tactics, a global community of human rights defenders, to host a week-long virtual discussion on challenges that children face when accessing justice. Advocacy Officer, Anita Goh, facilitated a peer-to-peer dialogue along with six other expert conversation leaders, which allowed us to reach out to new audiences and link up with actors that do not often focus on children's rights. This event examined current justice systems and was a platform to brainstorm innovative new ways to ensure that children were empowered to use justice systems at national, regional and international levels. The discussion pages on the website were viewed more than 1,700 times throughout the week.

Ratify OP3 CRC

INTERNATIONAL COALITION FOR THE OPCRC
ON A COMMUNICATIONS PROCEDURE

Ratify OP3 CRC Coalition

Ratify OP3 CRC, International Coalition for the OPCRC on a Communications Procedure (the International Coalition) is the leading group of NGOs working together to promote the ratification of the third OP. It was set up to replace Child Rights Connect's working group after the adoption of OP3 CRC to ensure the rapid entry into force of the new treaty.

Having taken a leadership role in creating the International Coalition, our activities in 2014 focused on jointly organising events to mark the entry into force of the protocol, coordinating a statement at the HRC's Annual Day on the Rights of the Child on behalf of the coalition as well as the side event (see page 12), and planning a regional capacity-building conference in Ethiopia (see page 10). The International Coalition now counts 96 members from around the world.

www.ratifyOP3CRC.org – a user-friendly information hub

Child Rights Connect led the design of the new website of the International Coalition, which was launched on the day of the entry into force of the OP3 CRC. As founding member of the International Coalition, we had set up, funded and updated the original website. Before passing on to another organisation, we re-structured and re-designed it to provide key information in a more engaging way. The new website is available in 6 languages and provides coalition members around the globe with a platform for collaboration and advocacy advice.

Empowering children to advocate for their rights

A key aim of Child Rights Connect's work towards better promoting and protecting children's rights is making sure that children can take part in processes to monitor, report on and advocate for their rights – and to do so in a way that is safe, ethical and meaningful. Our experience has shown that, while there have been improvements in making the UN human rights system more accessible to children, there is still work to be done to find ways to effectively incorporate children's views in its work.

In 2014, Child Rights Connect continued to promote child participation in the reporting process and facilitated children's engagement in other areas of work of the Committee, including through the use of new technologies. We supported the Committee in developing the working methods to facilitate child participation in its work, which they adopted this year, and continue to assist with the implementation and evaluation.

Beyond the opportunities for children to engage directly with the Committee, we ensured that their voices are heard and taken into account in the HRC's Annual Day on the Rights of the Child, both in 2014 (see page 12) and in preparation for 2015. Through focus group discussions and surveys with children, our Secretariat and Working Groups gathered information to feed into UN discussions, reports and resolutions on children's rights.

Children actively engaging with the Committee

To make sure that children, as rights-holders, are able to fully participate in the reporting process, we give specific support on the opportunities only available for children and child-led organisations, including the preparation of their own reports and a separate meeting with the Committee during the pre-session. We raise awareness among national NGOs, coalitions and NHRIs about these opportunities and provide advice to organisations already working with children on how they can guide children in the reporting process.

During 2014, Child Rights Connect transmitted reports written by children and NGO reports with children's inputs from: Cambodia, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Gambia, Ghana, Honduras, Mauritius, Mexico, Netherlands, Nepal, Sweden, Tanzania, and Uruguay. Additionally, we supported children to meet with the Committee 10 times over the course of the year, including the Committee's first virtual children's meeting.

For optimal child participation, it is important that children are informed and prepared in a way that speaks to them. For each child or group of children that travels to meet with the Committee in Geneva, Child Rights Connect conducts a virtual briefing via Skype a few weeks before their trip. We also hold a "children's debriefing and exchange" meeting parallel to our sessions with the NGO representatives at our forums (see page 9). This way, children have a space to reflect on their experiences in Geneva, brainstorm on next steps for their advocacy at home, and share with other children about their experiences and

“Thanks for your time and guidance to the Nepali children in Geneva. The preparatory meeting in your office helped us to be clear on the next day's programme for the CRC Committee meeting. The children did wonderfully in their morning session with the Committee. The children and we are highly satisfied with the sessions.”



KUMAR BHATTARAI
CHAIRPERSON, CONSORTIUM OF ORGANISATIONS
WORKING FOR CHILD PARTICIPATION
(CONSORTIUM-NEPAL)

challenges engaging with the CRC reporting cycle and advocating for their rights.

Working methods on child participation

The Committee adopted its working methods on child participation in June 2014. Having co-organised the Committee's retreat on child participation in late 2013 and supported the drafting of its working methods, we broadly disseminated them to our members and partners, especially those working at national level and who actively participate in the Committee's reporting process.

Using ICTs to put the Committee in touch with children

Using information communications technologies (ICTs) for the Committee to talk to children helps to mitigate barriers such as distance and economic status. The Committee's willingness to organise virtual meetings and events shows its desire to make the reporting process more accessible to children, especially those who cannot travel to Geneva.

Even before the formal adoption of their working methods on child participation, we started to promote the Committee's essential requirements for meaningful, effective and safe participation of children – especially by using online communication. During the Committee's 68th pre-session, we facilitated the first video conferencing call between the Committee and children with disabilities from a country in Africa, who were able to explain the impact of the generalised discrimination against them on their rights as children, and discuss what it will mean for them when they become adults.

The Committee again moved towards greater accessibility for children in its 25th anniversary event. Child Rights Connect has actively worked with the Committee in organising calls and events, writing and disseminating information in a child-friendly way and hosting submissions from children on our website.

These working methods provide the first international standards on child participation in UN human rights processes. They include clear procedures for the engagement of children in the reporting process, which we use to advise children and accompanying adults to prepare for meeting the Committee.

Not only will we use these working methods for the Committee's reporting process, but we will support the Committee in adapting them to its other areas of work, such as its General Comments and Days of General Discussion, as well as to other UN human rights mechanisms or processes including the Human Rights Council and its Universal Periodic Review.

Children speaking out on public spending

There are often doubts as to children's ability to talk about matters that affect them in their daily lives, nevermind talking about more complex issues such as public spending. However, given the right information and forum to do so, children can raise very pertinent issues as to why the public services they are entitled to are underfunded.

In the context of the Committee's general comment on the right of the child and public spending (see page 6) and the 2015 HRC Annual Day (see page 13), our informal Working Group on Public Investment joined forces with the Centre for Children's Rights (Queens University, Belfast) to develop a methodology for consultations with children on the topic "Towards better investment in the rights of the child". The Centre for Children's Rights adopts a children's rights-based approach to all research that engages children and young people as participants. They reached out to children in 71 countries, using various face-to-face consultation tools and an online survey

The staff of Child Rights Connect has unparalleled experience of working with children to ensure that they can engage meaningfully in international fora. They have been able to harness this expertise to influence practice and provide much-needed support to both children and adults through the development of written guidelines as well as ongoing day to day assistance when children come to Geneva.



LAURA LUNDY
PROFESSOR, QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY, BELFAST

hosted on the Child Rights Connect website. In total, the views of more than 2,650 children were collected and key findings were submitted to the Committee for its General Comment and OHCHR for the report prepared for the Annual Day.

This consultation demonstrated that children have clear views about how governments should spend money in ways that will realise children's rights and that they are able and willing to share these views. While their views on where governments need to invest may vary by context, clear common messages emerged, such as:

- Investment needs to reflect and meet the requirements of children in the communities and localities in which they live.
- Information about how governments spend money for children, including in ways that are accessible to children.

- Children want to be included in decision-making about government expenditure, and they consider that their insight will help governments to make better decisions about investment.

In addition to having children's views on the issue, it was a pilot process to develop guidance on how to consult children from different parts of the world on matters that affect them and present them in a format that can be used at international level. In so doing, we are starting to pave the way to have more systematic and meaningful participation of children in international processes and mechanisms.

Strengthening our expertise on child participation methodologies

Child Rights Connect regularly supports children to report to the Committee and take part in other international mechanisms. However, by the time we are in contact with the children, they have already been a part of a national process to develop an alternative report or other forms of information. These processes have led to both positive and negative examples of child participation at international level. To develop further our ability to effectively support children to utilise the UN system to advocate for their rights, the Secretariat had a two-day training, with a professor from Queen's University Belfast, to discuss strategies, challenges and practical methods for engaging with children about their rights from a distance. One of the outcomes of the training was the beginning of a plan to develop a set of standards for child participation in international human rights meetings and processes.



Child Rights Connect Secretariat brainstorms with expert Laura Lundy about standards for international child participation.



Organisational Development

A strategic plan for the next five years

In March 2014, our General Assembly adopted the new strategic plan for 2015-2019. The final strategic objectives build on our achievements, opportunities, but also challenges. Core areas of work like the CRC reporting process include a stronger element on the implementation of the Committee's recommendations and increasingly reaching out to NHRIs and children. Meanwhile, our work around the HRC, UPR and other UN human rights mechanisms and processes, has also been developed. An important part of the focus is to strengthen the collaboration with our members, so that we can have more impact at both the international level, but also the national one. Meanwhile, an area which was nascent when we drafted the 2010-2014 strategic plan, namely the OP3 CRC, has become a strategic objective in its own right, as children's access to justice has become a cornerstone of our work. Finally, an area which has been cross-cutting, namely child participation, has become a strategic objective, as this specific focus increases the scope of our activities in supporting children to actively use the international human rights system as part of their advocacy to advance their own rights and those of other children.

Following its adoption, the second half of 2014 was spent putting everything in place to be ready to start implementing the plan in January 2015. This included reviewing the Secretariat's organogram, adapting staff members' areas of responsibility, identifying priority posts for coming years, developing a new work plan and budget and identifying and reaching out to new donors.

Strengthening coordination in our network

In anticipation of our upcoming strategic plan, the Secretariat focused on amplifying and improving our communications with members to foster greater and more efficient collaboration within the network. Throughout the year, the Secretariat piloted new tools and utilised additional channels of communication. This strengthened our collaboration and facilitated the access to timely and relevant information for our members and partners.

Additional and improved communications efforts include:

- **Weekly “member news” emails** that provide updates on UN processes and entry points, information on opportunities to collaborate and a place for members to share their efforts with the network.
- Launch of a **children's rights-focused online calendar for HRC sessions** (see page 13).
- **Live tweeting and active social media coverage of CRC sessions**, as well as a focus on sharing information on UN opportunities and news from members through these channels.
- An **online calendar and map showcasing events around the world** to mark the CRC 25th anniversary (see page 3).
- **A new internal contact management system**, allowing for better streamlining and tracking of communication through various channels.

To ensure that our communications efforts match the needs of our members, we conducted workshops with members during our 2014 General Assembly. This allowed the Secretariat and members to talk about what information is useful/interesting to members, decide on timelines for distribution, and identify the most relevant tools and channels for outreach.

This focus on communications is also in line with our work with the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the support we give to allow it to be more visible and accessible, especially to children, by using ICTs.

Executive Committee Elections

During our General Assembly each year, members of our Executive Committee are elected by the members of our network. In 2014, there were considerable changes in the Executive Committee, as certain long-standing members finished their final mandates in accordance with our statutes, namely Alan Kikuchi-White (SOS Children's Villages), Veronica Yates (CRIN), and Peter Newell (APPROACH). Roberta Cecchetti (Save the Children) also stepped down at the end of her second mandate. We wish to thank them for their work while serving as Executive Committee members.

Amongst the six candidates nominated for election, Ileana Bello (Defence for Children International)



2014 Child Rights Connect General Assembly.

and Conchi Ballesteros (Plataforma de Infancia) were re-elected unanimously. In addition, Delia Pop (Hope and Homes for Children), Elinor Milne (APPROACH) and Ulrika Soneson Cilliers (Save the Children International) and Sabine Saliba Boutruche (CRIN) were elected unanimously.

Anne-Sophie Lois, from Plan International, was elected unanimously to become the President of the Executive Committee. She will serve in this role for one year, until the end of her final term.

New Member Organisations

During the General Assembly, the network welcomed three new member organisations, namely:

- Franciscans International
- TRACK (Truth and Reconciliation for the Adoption Community in Korea)
- INGO “Ponimanie”

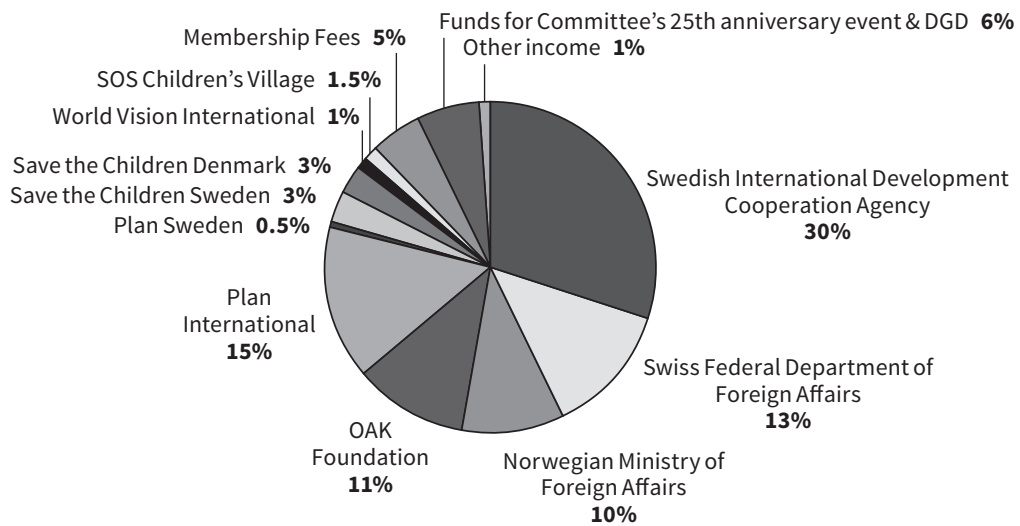
Changes in Working Groups

1. The Working Group on Indigenous Children, which had been inactive in 2013, was officially closed.

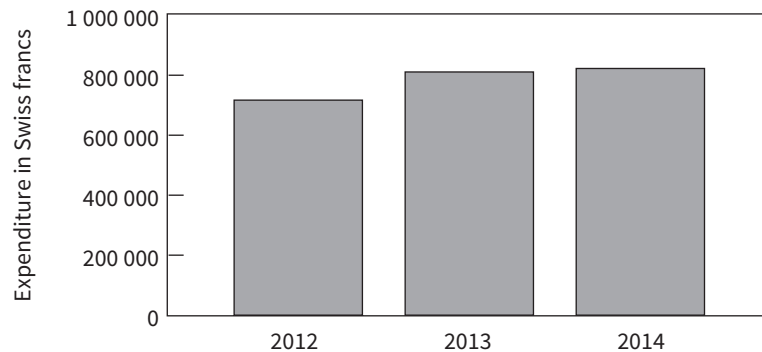
Accounts and funding

Child Rights Connect sincerely thanks all of our donors, whose support allowed us to carry out our activities to advance children's rights.

2014 sources of funding



2014 accounts and funding



2014 expenditures of Child Rights Connect

	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency	Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs	Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs	OAK Foundation	Plan International	Plan Sweden	Save the Children Sweden	Save the Children Denmark	World Vision International	SOS Children's Villages	Membership fees	Funds for Committee's 25th anniversary event & DGD	Other income	Child Rights Connect, from reserves	TOTAL
2014															
ACTIVITIES															
NGO participation in CRC/OPs reporting process	1740	11,937.42	68,097	2,010		3468								7,368	94,621
Tools & research on the CRC and UPR	600			1,000											1,600
Trainings and meetings on the CRC, HRC & UPR	6,109	6,781		3,878	319									332	17,420
International Coalition and campaign on OP3 CRC – trainings and meetings	98	677		4,081											4,856
OP3 CRC publications	334	9		12,289											12,632
Events on the 25th anniversary of the CRC		193										26,526	410	1,387	28,515
Engagement with the Committee and its Day of General Discussion	2,758	2,456										16,817			22,031
Personnel and Interns	180,256	61,084	4,616	56,291	108,634		25,594	24,093	5,000	10,870	26,912	1,398		50,973	555,722
Rebranding process & annual report	1,296	1,375									3,274				5,945
Website, online platform & social media	1,028	456								74	339			15	1,912
CORE COSTS															
Rent, operational costs & staff development	27,502	10,976			3,047						3,516			3,961	49,002
ExCo, General Assembly & Working Groups' activities	3,911	1,670								1,000	352				6,933
Professional services (accountant, auditors)	4,143	2,385									750	1,500	4,700	1,380	14,858
<i>Total expenditure per donor in 2014</i>	229,775	100,000	72,713	79,551	112,000	3,468	25,594	24,093	5,000	11,944	35,143	46,240	5,110	65,416	816,047
TOTAL DONOR INCOME	229,775	100,000	72,713	79,551	112,000	3,468	25,594	24,093	5,000	11,944	35,143	46,240	5,110		750,631

Structure and Governance

Child Rights Connect consists of the following organs, the most senior being the **General Assembly**, which meets annually, and is comprised of our member organisations. The **Executive Committee**, accountable to the General Assembly, provides strategic support, guidance, and oversight of the work of the network. **The Secretariat** is responsible for carrying out the daily work of the network. To advance child rights within the international human rights system, our members join forces through thematic Working Groups.

Secretariat Staff

Lisa Myers – Director
Roisín Fegan – Interim Director (January to March)
Anita Goh – Advocacy Officer
Ilaria Paolazzi – Child Rights Officer
Laura Collier – Communications Officer
Muriel Dreifuss Bisson – Administrative Officer
Laure Elmaleh – Child Rights Assistant



2014 Child Rights Connect Secretariat Staff

Short-term staff and independent consultants

Sabine Cazenave, Jennifer Lynn Conway, Barbara Gual, Pilar Jimenez, Erik Nyman, Laura Theytaz-Bergman, Pamela Valdes

Interns and Volunteers

Brice Bambara, Dorian Hall, Elisabeth Markee-Behrends, Karolina Saviova, Andrea Soley Junco, Kirstin Turney
UN Volunteer translators: Catherine Kohler, Lucía Valerga

Executive Committee

Anne-Sophie Lois, Plan International – President
Eylah Kadjar, Terre des Hommes – Vice President
Ileana Bello, Defence for Children International – Treasurer
Delia Pop, Hope and Homes for Children – Secretary
Conchi Ballesteros, Plataforma de Organizaciones de Infancia
Ulrika Soneson Cilliers, Save the Children International
Jorge Freyre, Red latinoamericana y caribeña por la defensa de los derechos de los niños, niñas y adolescentes (REDLAMYC)
Elinor Milne, APPROACH
Sabine Saliba, Child Rights International Network (CRIN)
Annabel Trapp, War Child Holland

Thematic Working Groups

Children of Incarcerated Parents
Children Without Parental Care
Mainstreaming Child Rights
Universal Birth Registration
Violence against Children -
Sub-group: Focus Group on Children in Armed Conflict
Public Spending (informal working group to be approved in 2015)



Members

Child Rights Connect is a network of 82 national, regional and international NGOs and networks. Together we have a broad reach and work in almost every country of the world.

2014 list of Child Right Connect member organisations:

1. Action for Children and Youth Aotearoa
2. African Child Policy Forum
3. Alliance for Children (Mauritius)
4. Anti-Slavery International
5. APPROACH Ltd. – Global Initiative to End all Corporal Punishment of Children
6. Arigatou International
7. Associated Country Women of the World
8. Association of Networks for Community Empowerment
9. Baha'i International Community
10. Casa Alianza Suisse
11. Child Helpline International
12. Child Rights International Network (CRIN)
13. Child Rights Network Switzerland
14. Children's Rights Alliance
15. Children's Rights Alliance for England (CRAE)
16. Child Soldiers International
17. ChildFund International
18. Coalition Against Trafficking in Women International
19. COFRADE (Conseil français des Associations pour les Droits de l'Enfant)
20. Consortium for Street Children
21. Defence for Children International
22. Defence for Children International – DCI Costa Rica
23. ECPAT International
24. Edmund Rice International
25. EDUCO
26. Egyptian Foundation for Advancement of Childhood Conditions
27. Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation
28. EuroChild
29. European Association for Children in Hospital
30. Fédération Internationale des Communautés Educatives
31. First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada
32. Franciscans International
33. Friends World Committee for Consultation (QUUNO)
34. Hope and Homes for Children
35. Human Rights Watch
36. INGO "Ponimanie"
37. Inter African Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women (IAC-HTPS)
38. International Alliance of Women
39. International Association of Youth and Family Judges and Magistrates
40. International Baby Food Action Network
41. International Catholic Child Bureau (BICE)
42. International Council of Jewish Women
43. International Council of Women
44. International Federation of Social Workers
45. International Foster Care Organisation

46. International Inner Wheel
47. International Institute for Child Rights and Development
48. International Juvenile Justice Observatory (IJJO)
49. International Movement “ATD Fourth World”
50. International Play Association: Promoting the Child’s Right to Play
51. International School Psychology Association
52. International Social Service
53. Internet Watch Foundation
54. Make Mothers Matter International / Le Mouvement Mondial des Mères
55. Marist International Solidarity Foundation (FMSI)
56. Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
57. National Aboriginal Islander Child Care
58. Plan International
59. Plataforma de Organizaciones de Infancia
60. Proyecto Solidario
61. Red Latinoamericana de Acogimiento
62. Red Latinoamericana y Caribena por la Defensa de los Derechos de los Niños, las Niñas y los Adolescentes
63. Resources Aimed at the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (RAPCAN)
64. ROC (The “Right of the Child” NGO)
65. Roshni Homes Trust
66. Save the Children International
67. Society “Our Children” Opatija
68. SOS Children’s Villages International
69. Tanzania Child Rights Forum
70. Terre des Hommes International Federation
71. Together Scotland
72. TRACK — Truth and Reconciliation for the Adoption Community of Korea
73. WAO Afrique
74. War Child Holland
75. Women’s World Summit Foundation
76. World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action
77. World Alliance of YMCAs
78. World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts
79. World Organisation Against Torture / SOS Torture (OMCT)
80. World Union of Catholic Women’s Organisations
81. World Vision International
82. Young Men’s Christian Association of Costa Rica



Thanks

Child Rights Connect relies on the financial support of its donors and partners to run its programmes and support its objectives. We are grateful to the following donors for their support in 2014:

Governments

Norway
Sweden
Switzerland

Foundations

OAK Foundation

Child Rights Connect and International Coalition Members

Plan International
Plan Sweden
Save the Children Sweden
Save the Children Denmark
SOS Children's Villages
World Vision International
Membership Fees

Participating in the production and editing of this report

Laura Collier
Lisa Myers

Concept and design

minimum graphics

Printing

Imprimerie Minute

Child Rights Connect envisions a world in which child rights, as defined by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, are universally recognised and realised. With your support, we can help make this happen. Donations can be made to Child Rights Connect through:

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UBS SA Vermont – Nations
Chemin Louis Dunant, 17
1211 Geneva 20
Switzerland

For Swiss Francs and other currencies:

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IBAN: CH55 0027 9279 2300 1001 M

For US Dollars:

Account No. 279-230010.60L
IBAN: CH55 0027 9279 2300 1060 L
BIC: UBSWCHZH80A

For Euros:

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IBAN : CH020027927923001062H
BIC UBSWCHZH80A

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