



CASE STUDY

Children's Engagement in the CRC Reporting Cycle

Children providing inputs to a State party report to the CRC Committee

COUNTRY:

Iceland

ORGANISATION:

A working group appointed to draft the State party 5th and 6th periodic report on the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and its Optional protocols in Iceland, made up of representatives from the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, the Ministry of Welfare, the Ministry of Transport and Local Government and the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

The child participation process was facilitated by UNICEF Iceland's participation specialist.

ABSTRACT:

In April 2018, a working group with representatives from several ministries was appointed to draft the State party periodic report on the implementation of the UNCRC in Iceland. For the first time, the country decided to integrate children's inputs to the State party report and charged the working group to conduct consultations with children to inform the report and promote child participation.

The purpose was to have a broad national consultation and to reach many children from across the country through an online questionnaire sent to all municipalities, and a consultation meeting. A total of almost 100 children and young people participated to this consultation process and had the chance to exercise their right to be heard and share their views and experiences.

OBJECTIVES:

To raise awareness and promote child participation through a broad national consultation and to inform the State party report.

OUTCOME:

Children's views were compiled as an [annex](#) to the [State party report](#), which details the process of the consultations and answers of the children. Children's views were also integrated directly into the State party report. References to the consultations with the children were made regarding 3 topics in the report: Awareness of the Convention, Non-Discrimination and Respect for the views of the child, such as: *"51. One of the issues raised during the consultation process for the report by both adults and children was worries about discrimination against children based on residence."*

TIMELINE:

- April 2018: Preparation meeting of the working group drafting the State Party report
- May 2018: Consultation meeting with children
- May-June 2018: Online questionnaire for children
- February 2019: Submission of the State party report

PROCESS:

Goal:

To provide children with an opportunity to share their thoughts and recommendations relating to the situation of child rights in Iceland.

Important context!

In its [Working methods for the participation of children in the reporting process](#), the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (the Committee) indicates that *"With regard to the reporting process, States parties have an obligation to ensure that children are encouraged and enabled to participate in the preparation of the State reports to the Committee."* The Committee always emphasizes, in general communications and concluding observations, that State party reports should be broad and participatory. **This means that States should consult with all non-State actors, including children, to get their views on the situation in the country and on-going challenges.** While non-State actors can give the government their views, or provide information and statistics based on their work with children, the government takes the final decision on what it will include in its report.

➔ TIPS:

- Civil society organisations should remind the State party about its obligation and encourage it to hold national consultations with relevant actors to inform its report, including children. It is possible to offer advice and assistance on child participation in this process and encourage the State party to mainstream child participation across its other activities.
- States parties should clearly highlight direct inputs from children in their reports.

- Participating in the State party report does not prevent children from sending their own submissions to the Committee and to participate in all other CRC reporting cycle steps.

PHASE 1 – ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRE

Goal:

Reach a large and diverse number of children around the country and collect their views through an online questionnaire (which was anonymous and provided some information on the process to inform children).

Steps:

- The working group contacted an expert in leisure and social issues, to assist the group in ensuring the participation of children for the consultation as well as the questionnaire.
- Two preparatory meetings were held by the working group to define the purpose of the consultation and to identify the information that would be requested from children.
- The questionnaire was prepared by the expert assisting the working group and in consultation with the working group, and sent to all municipalities of the country. The questionnaire included general questions on the UNCRC, as well as on Protection, Participation and Provision. Check the questionnaire [here](#) (page 22).
- Representatives of youth councils and children in the municipality were invited to complete the questionnaire.
- Results of the questionnaire were compiled – a total of 74 children participated.

➔ **TIPS:**

- An online questionnaire sent to all municipalities encourages diverse participation with answers collected from across the country.
- Some children do not have access to internet, so it is important to consider other means of dissemination (e.g. via post or telephone), as well as to consider accessibility of the survey (e.g. accessible format and design, age-appropriate questions, audio and braille versions).
- Ideally, children participate in all steps and are involved in the drafting and analysis of the questionnaire.

PHASE 2 – THE CONSULTATION MEETING WITH CHILDREN

The consultation meeting took place from 2.30pm to 6pm with 30 minutes break in a meeting room at the Ministry of Education, Science and Culture

Participants included:

- 19 children aged 10-18: representatives from 11 child rights organisations and schools. See the list [here](#) (Annexe IV page 23). Each organisation and school was asked to send two representatives and ensured that informed consent had been collected from all

child participants (including the knowledge they could pause or end their participation at any time).

- The ministerial working group. See the list of the members [here](#) (Annexe V page 24).
- The expert on leisure and social issues assisting the group to ensure the participation of children in the drafting report.

PREPARATORY PRESENTATION OF THE MEETING

Goal:

Present the child and working group's participants and introduce the State party report to encourage discussion relating to the topics raised in the online questionnaire.

Steps:

- Introductory presentation to familiarize the children with the State party report to the Committee, and the purpose of the meeting.
- Ice breaker and team building games to allow the discussion to flow freely.
- Division of the children's group into four smaller groups by age group to engage in discussions about the questionnaire.

➔ **TIPS:**

- When organising consultation meetings with children, it is essential to inform children about the different ways they can engage in the process and what they are contributing to, with regards to the [Committee's working methods on child participation](#).
- It is essential to offer a short safeguarding briefing where children can learn about safety during the activity, for example, the possibility to end their participation at any point, how to find a child-friendly space to take a break, and who to go to if they have a safety concern.
- Ideally, a peer-led selection process is taken forward to select the child representatives to take part in the consultation.

DISCUSSION TABLES

Goal:

Each table was centered on a specific question chosen by the working group based on the previous questionnaire. This allowed child participants to engage freely on the topic they found relevant and to switch between them at will.

Steps:

- The team prepared tables that would engage on one specific topic from the online questionnaire: Protection, provision, and participation.
- Each table had a copy of the articles of the UNCRC in the form of child friendly flashcards.
- Children could choose the table they would join and could change at will.
- Members of the working group took notes for each of these tables.

➔ **TIPS:**

- Discussion tables allowed exchanges to remain on topic while the option to change tables at will ensured that participants would remain engaged in discussions that were relevant to them.
- Using a digital platform such as WordCloud to bring an interactive dimension to the consultation helped to illustrate and capture the main themes of the consultation. Anonymous answers promote equal and safe participation for children.

PHASE 3 – FEEDBACK ON THE DRAFT REPORT

The whole process and next steps (including in relation to the CRC reporting process) were explained to the child participants in follow up after the meeting.

A draft of the report was sent to the children who participated in the consultation meeting and published on the government's consultation portal for comments in October 2018.

The child participants of the consultation meeting were notified once the draft was ready and has been published.

➔ **TIP:**

- To ensure sustained participation throughout the process, it is recommended for the child participants to be consulted in the drafting stage.

CHALLENGES:

Because there were children of various ages, the working group had to adapt the planning. The youngest group only attended the first half of the meeting, but still discussed the whole questionnaire. This was because the meeting was held after school and sitting through long meetings can be difficult for young children. The working group also choose to regroup children with the same age for the discussion table.

A particular effort was made to consult a diversity of children including children from vulnerable or marginalized groups. For instance, anticipating the fact that some children would not be able to attend, the group sent the questionnaire in an attempt to reach a wider segment of the population.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER STEPS:

- A debriefing meeting with the children after the exercise and an anonymous survey could be made to collect feedback from children on the process, their experience and if they think their views were sufficiently taken into account in the State report.
- A child safeguarding policy and procedure, and the [Working Methods of the Committee for Child Participation](#) and especially the 9 requirements, should drive and be priority for the whole process including follow-up.

- Children should be involved in all phases, including analysing results and planning follow-up steps. They should be empowered with a long-term perspective for their participation to be meaningful.
- A child friendly version/translation in Icelandic of the State report and all documents related to the reporting cycle (such as the List of Issues, Concluding Observations...) should be taken forward, for children to understand and monitor the full CRC reporting cycle (we suggest advocating for the State party to undertake these activities in line with its duties under the Convention).
- The process should be open and transparent, from the call to participation to how the children's inputs were used and integrated.

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