



ANNUAL REPORT 2021



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Introduction

Forewords from our Child Advisors

At Child Rights Connect, our work and the way we work is guided and informed by a [permanent, global Children's Advisory Team \(CAT\)](#). This is what three of the CAT members had to say about 2021:



Working with Child Rights Connect and being part of the CAT team was so eye opening! I've learnt so much about children all over the world through all the virtual meets we've had and the webinars that I've been a part of while representing Child Rights Connect. I've also learnt so much about child rights that I as a teenager wasn't even aware of, and I'm sure many children aren't aware of as well. But with the knowledge I've gained through this experience I'll definitely make sure to make a profound impact on my peers here in the Pacific. I can fully say that this experience has really gassed my drive and passion for social justice work especially here in the Pacific where most people aren't fully versed with human rights considering that most Oceania countries are NDCs. (...) I used to think that young people's voices were ignored and we just had to bear with it and continue doing work even if we weren't heard or listened to. But I must say, my perspective on this and honestly everything has changed. My mind has broadened severely, I have adapted to rational thinking and for this I am grateful knowing that it will allow me to understand other people which I think every good leader is able to do- to be a good listener. This gives me hope that one day I get to impact many more children and young people."

Melaia, 2021 child advisor, Fiji



Being part of the CAT has been a great experience in my life, the quality of the work was exceptional (...). The commitment that Child Rights Connect has with the rights of children and young people, with making visible the violation of our rights is something that I deeply appreciate, also that they have made it possible for me to carry the voice of the children and young people of my country and always respect my position from the point of view of disability and their good will in trying to make the spaces accessible. I felt very good when I participated in the meetings and communicated with my voice certain perspectives and contributed with my opinion to the work carried out the previous year."

Jorge, 2021 child advisor, Bolivia



My experience as a child advisor is something I'm deeply grateful for. Joining Child Rights Connect made me aware of how important children's rights is in this world where children's voices can't be heard and often ignored. Before, I was a coward because I often didn't have confidence in myself and I had the tendency to hold back my opinions. Because I was scared that maybe no one will pay attention to what I would say and that maybe I was wrong to voice out my opinions. But now I have gained myself a little confidence and able to speak out my opinions, because of that I'm truly grateful that I got to be a part of Child Rights Connect. And I'm very happy that I'm able to meet and interact with so many people from different countries that have different culture, religion, and language than mine.

Being in Child Rights Connect is really a meaningful and life-changing experience for me."

Sophia, 2021 child advisor, Indonesia

Words from the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children

Children at the center of solutions for ending violence



Participation is one of the four core principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), and a cross-cutting priority for my mandate. Children everywhere are being part of the solution towards building a world free from violence, whether by supporting their communities and their peers, coming up with innovative solutions, or connecting with decision makers. Adults are no longer the gatekeepers of participation, but they are still responsible for assuring children's protection when they participate, and for supporting children's participation in order to influence decision-making. Strengthening the relationship between participating children and adult decision makers is, therefore, essential for promoting a culture of meaningful participation that leads towards ending all forms of violence against children.

Coinciding with the 49th Session of the Human Rights Council and the presentation of my annual report, for the first time ever, I held an interactive dialogue with over 400 children from all over the world. This for me is a pivotal accountability exercise. Children are a critical stakeholder group to help implement the CRC, to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Sustainable Development Goals, and as such they must be included in all the processes affecting them.

To inform children ahead of my interactive dialogue with Human Rights Council, a child-friendly version of my report was developed and made it available to children in different languages. During the event, children put forward almost 200 questions that highlighted the issues they're concerned about or need further support around when it comes to tackling violence.

Children's participation was one of the issues most addressed, more specifically the need to balance their participation and their protection, and the need to further strengthen their relationship with adults to effectively influence change. Children also put forward questions regarding different forms of violence and the latest actions taken to help address them, as well as specifically asking about children in vulnerable situations being proactively included in decision-making processes. Children are advocating for more inclusive and collaborative societies.

Following this interactive dialogue, I held a briefing with States where I also had the opportunity to amplify children's messages, helping to strengthen the intergenerational relationship critical to meeting the Sustainable Development Goals. Children themselves also had the opportunity to address States, outlining their main takeaways from this engagement.

These interactions and engagement with children along with the child-friendly version of my report are not isolated and anecdotic events. Being accountable to children should be part of a culture of meaningful participation. Children's positive response to such interactions, their active engagement, their eagerness to learn more, their enthusiasm to access new and relevant information, and their commitment as agents of change looking to end all forms of violence against children, are also a driver to promote a culture of being accountable to children. This vision is shared with key partner organizations like Child Rights Connect, who through their commitment to children's rights are contributing to promoting a culture of truly meaningful participation, and a world free from violence against children.

Najat Maalla M'jid, Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Violence against Children

About us

Child Rights Connect is a non-governmental organisation founded in 1983 and now operates as the largest global network of child rights organisations. With close to 90 member organisations, it spans all regions, reaching millions of children in almost 200 countries, and benefits from a diversity of approaches and experiences in realising the rights of the child under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and its Optional Protocols. Through us, children's rights defenders, including children, can address the international community with one global voice and have a stronger influence on political decisions.

Vision

We envision a world in which all children have their human rights respected, protected, promoted and fulfilled, as enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols.

What added value does Child Rights Connect bring?

- We are an expert organisation on, and strategic partner of, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC Committee), empowering children's rights defenders, including children, from around the world for almost 40 years.
- We are the largest global child rights network and platform for joint civil society advocacy at the Human Rights Council and its mechanisms, as well as with human rights treaty bodies.
- We are the leading organisation bringing global attention to safe, empowering and sustainable child participation and the rights and empowerment of child human rights defenders.
- We advocate for access to justice for child victims of human rights violations, principally through the universal ratification and strategic use of the third Optional Protocol to the UNCRC on a Communications Procedure (OPIC).

Strengthening our Network

Diversifying our reach: Five new members joined the network

Child Rights Connect members are national, regional and international organisations and coalitions working with and for children in various contexts. This broad and diverse membership brings together a wide array of expertise in children's rights and a vast diversity of experiences and approaches for realising children's human rights worldwide.

In 2021, five new members joined the network, including three from under-represented regions within the network (Africa and Latin America), further diversifying the composition of our membership, which now counts around 75% of member organisations working in the Global South. Our new members are the: **Campaña Latinoamericana por el Derecho a la Educación (CLADE)** established in Brazil, Child's Destiny and Development Organization (CHIDDO) in South Sudan, **Heirs to Our Oceans (H2OO)** in the United States of America, **Kindernothilfe (KNH)** in Germany, and **Red por los Derechos de la Infancia en México (REDIM)** in Mexico. In addition to bringing geographic expertise, these new members enrich our network by contributing their thematic expertise on innovative or under-represented topics within the network such as children and livelihoods, children in humanitarian settings, children living in street situations, the sexual exploitation of children, children and minorities, and the rights of children on the move.

Child participation at the core of what we do and how we do it: the permanent, global Children's Advisory Team

Building on the permanent [Children's Advisory Team](#) (CAT) established in 2020, we extended our global team of child advisors which operated throughout 2021 as a **permanent group within our organisation and central to advancing our efforts on children's empowerment globally**. In 2021, the CAT was composed of 16 children, including eight girls and a child with disabilities, aged between 11 to 17 years old, each living in different countries.

The new-coming members brought broader regional diversity to the team compared to the previous year, with representatives from the Middle East and North Africa and the Caribbean regions gaining knowledge on and advocating for the rights of the child in these often-under-represented regions. Throughout the year, child advisors acted as human rights defenders, defining their own roadmap for action in response to the pressing issues identified by them and contributing to ours, in line with our Strategy. In addition to participating in a three-week online e-learning course on the rights of the child, CAT members informed the development of the child-friendly Guide '[Putting the Rights of Child Human Rights Defenders into Practice](#)' and its dissemination amongst other children, including in Moldova.

They co-facilitated and intervened as panelists in a high-level event on child rights mainstreaming, co-organised with Amnesty International during the 76th session of the UN General Assembly, which was attended by State representatives, UN diplomats and civil society representatives. Following [their mobilization in response to the COVID-19](#) challenges faced by children, started in 2020, CAT members also developed in 2021 child-friendly informative [videos](#) about mental health care during the stressful times of the pandemic. Importantly, for the first time, two child advisors represented the CAT in the activities of the Executive Committee during 2021, making Child Rights Connect one of just a handful of global civil society organisations with child participation in its governance.



I had many expectations, and they really were fulfilled!! It really was incredible to be at Child Rights Connect because it gave me the opportunity to go further than I imagined, to be able to be heard and reach decision makers, I felt very comfortable with the people I worked with. It made me a more empowered teenager with much more motivation to continue being a human rights defender, now very proud as other children about Child Rights Connect and how I was able to do my bit. I am so grateful, because I really learned a lot, it was amazing to meet other guys and girls from all over the world with the same goal, to make a better world!"

Rebeca, child advisor from 2021, El Salvador



Being a member of the CAT was a great experience for me, because I had the chance to discuss with my peers about local issues that affect children in each of our countries, as well as global issues that affect children in general. By participating in our meetings and by having the chance to express my opinion, I felt empowered and I believe that this team has shown to the governments all around the world that when you work for children, you have to work with them."

Andreas, child advisor from 2021, Cyprus

Meet with our permanent, global Children's Advisory Team

16

Children empowered as human rights defenders to shape and take forward activities on child rights, in line with our 2020-2024 strategic plan.

8

GIRLS

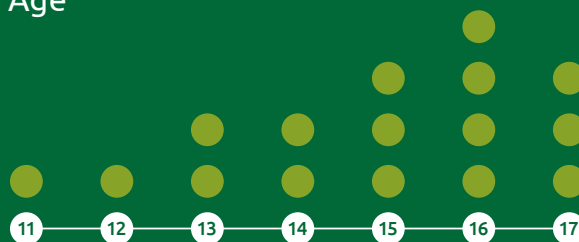
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BOYS

including a child with disabilities

each supported by a member/partner of child rights connect

Age



Where the child advisors are from – all regions of the world

Broader regional diversity compared to 2020

With members from Bangladesh, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Cyprus, Ivory Coast, Egypt, El Salvador, Fiji, Indonesia, Iraq, Jamaica, Mongolia, South Korea, Tanzania & the UK.



Being part of the team has been a great experience in my life, the quality of the work was exceptional, I never lacked human warmth, the translation team had a great performance, managing to convey all my opinions. The commitment that Child Rights Connect has with the rights of children and young people, with making visible the violation of our rights is something that I deeply appreciate, also that they have made it possible for me to carry the voice of the children and young people of my country and always respect my position from the point of view of disability and their goodwill in trying to make the spaces accessible.

Jorge, 16 years old, Bolivia



Working with Child Rights Connect and being part of the CAT team was so eye-opening! I've learned so much about children all over the world through all the virtual meets we've had and the webinars that I've been a part of while representing Child Rights Connect. I've also learned so much about child rights that I as a teenager wasn't even aware of, and I'm sure many children aren't aware of as well. But with the knowledge I've gained through this experience, I'll definitely make sure to make a profound impact on my peers here in the Pacific.

Melaia, 16 years old, Fiji

What child advisors say on their participation in the CAT

Programmes

From mission to realisation

Children's rights can only become a reality for every child if all States fulfil their obligations under the UNCRC and its Optional Protocols, and if children are empowered to claim and exercise their rights. This represents the impact goal of Child Rights Connect and its partners. Children's enjoyment of their rights is made possible – and is largely determined – by the actions of States, civil society and the UN human rights system.

Mission

We advocate for and support the universal adoption and full implementation of the UNCRC and its Optional Protocols, for the realisation of children's rights worldwide. We do this by convening and engaging with civil society and other relevant actors, by fostering cooperation and collaboration, and by empowering children's rights defenders, including children, to meaningfully participate in global advocacy for children's rights at different levels.

Our theory of change

Working methods



Awareness-raising
Capacity-building
Knowledge-sharing
Technical assistance



Publications
Strategic advice
Support to litigation



Advocacy
Communications
Networking, mobilization
and outreach

Key outputs

Children's rights defenders, including children, engage with the CRC and other UN mechanisms

Synergies emerge between the Committee on the Rights of the Child and other UN mechanisms

Child human rights defenders operate in a more enabling environment

Children's rights defenders engage in advocacy on children's rights, including towards ratification of the Optional Protocol on a Communications Procedure

Children's rights defenders use the Optional Protocol on a Communications Procedure to address violations of children's human rights

Key partnerships at national, regional and international levels are formed, strengthened and maintained

A strong and effective global Child Rights Connect Network

A well-functioning Secretariat supports Child Rights Connect's mission

Outcomes



Empowered children's rights defenders, including children



Strengthened human rights mechanisms and standards for children



Influenced political actions affecting children's lives

Impact



Civil society and children effectively influence the actions of States, the UN and other duty-bearers resulting in children enjoying their rights



The United Nations system takes action and influences the actions of duty-bearers to respect, fulfill and promote child rights



States take action, and influence the actions of other duty-bearers, to respect, fulfill and promote child rights

Every child in the world enjoys her/his human rights, and duty-bearers are accountable to children

Building back from the COVID-19 pandemic through child rights mainstreaming

A reflection from our Executive Director



2021 was yet another year with a great level of challenges, uncertainty and disillusion due to the COVID-19 pandemic and its persistent impact on child rights and the UN human rights system. While discussions on “building back better” took place in several international fora, violations of children’s rights continued to explode globally with growing evidence of long-term consequences on children. The UN Secretary General’s warned that “children risk being the biggest victims and the impact of the pandemic on them risks being catastrophic and amongst the most lasting consequences for societies as a whole”. This, unfortunately, has become a reality, compounded by other global crises such as the climate change one.

In this context, the continuous disruptions in the operation of the UN human rights mechanisms were source of increasing frustrations among civil society, including children, who were counting on the UN to hold governments to account and help with “building back better” from the pandemic. The situation has been dramatic for the CRC Committee who adopted Concluding Observations for only six States parties during the course of 2021. This is less than the usual number of States under review during a single session of the Committee. The backlog of State reports has rarely increased at such a pace and has reached one of the highest peaks.

To respond, we doubled our efforts to support civil society and child human rights defenders to make the most out of the UN, taking into account the

new challenging reality. More than ever before, our members and partners are relying on us to be abreast of opportunities and keep up with the last-minute changes to UN session schedules. We empowered children’s rights defenders to engage in more creative ways, to seize new opportunities, and to maximize the digital environment. It has been challenging for us too, but we have done all we could to maintain civil society’s motivation alive. “The UN depends on the active engagement of civil society actors”, the Secretary General stated at the beginning of the pandemic. Throughout 2021, we seized all opportunities to remind the UN of this.

A major undertaking towards pushing the UN to do more and better for child participation and children’s rights in general was our advocacy on child rights mainstreaming in response to the Secretary General’s report “Our Common Agenda”. This piece of work features as a key section of this annual report to reflect the importance of the achievements, not only for Child Rights Connect but for the global child rights movement. While there has been some hesitance as to whether it was the right moment to call on the UN to develop a system-wide strategy on child rights, we remain convinced that it was exactly the right moment to do so because of the urgency created by the COVID-19 pandemic. The UN needed a shake-up – to use the words of a New York diplomat – and this is what we did in 2021.

Alex Conte, Executive Director



Child rights mainstreaming

The COVID 19 pandemic has shown how easily children’s rights can be deprioritized or even forgotten in times of crisis. It has shed light on structural gaps and weaknesses when it comes to applying a child rights approach across sectors, what is called “child rights mainstreaming”. This concept is not new and comes from the General Comments of the CRC Committee. However, it is not widely known, as opposed to the concept of “gender mainstreaming”, and even less understood.

The Committee's Chair has recently explained what child rights mainstreaming is to the UN General Assembly with these [words](#):



Child rights mainstreaming is key to full realization of children's rights. Every person goes through childhood for 18 years, critical period that builds the foundation of the adult life. Children are important members of society, forming more than one fourth of humanity. Yet, so long we have failed to recognize their agencies and roles in building better, safer and sustainable society for all. But children have stood up proving that they are playing positive roles as civil society actors in many areas: to protect their own rights, ask for climate justice, fight to eliminate discrimination and promote peace and non-violence. The need to recognize children as rights holders and to ensure full realization of their all rights is more urgent than ever. (...) It is high time to call for children's rights mainstreaming as a clear UN policy. It is necessary to integrate children's rights perspectives into all areas and at all levels with a systematic application of a child rights approach, with child participation as a core principle".

Although they account for over a quarter of the world's population, children remain the only category of rights-holders who have a specific human rights treaty but no dedicated UN strategy to ensure policy coherence within the system. Important gaps in child rights mainstreaming within the UN were discussed during the UN Human Rights Council's [2020 High-level panel on child rights mainstreaming](#). The CRC Committee at that time stressed that the mainstreaming of children's rights requires a comprehensive approach from micro to macro levels, as well as a more comprehensive understanding of children's rights. So far, this high-level discussion is yet to deliver on concrete action.

Recent years have brought opportunities to remedy this situation. In September 2021, Child Rights Connect issued [a position paper](#) as a child rights response to the Secretary-General's report *"Our Common Agenda"*, voicing a strong call for the UN to put child rights at the core of all its actions. The position paper was [endorsed by 100 organisations](#), showing that civil society was united to put pressure on the UN and States to follow up to the 2020 High-Level Panel. Building on the position paper, in October 2021, an event on child rights mainstreaming was co-organised with Amnesty International during the 76th session of the UN General Assembly (with the sponsorship of the CRC Committee, the European Union (EU) and Uruguay), to further raise awareness and garner political support for this issue.



Mainstreaming is also a journey, which requires strategic objectives, adequate knowledge and know-how, and practical tools. I know we all are familiar with the good progress made as regards gender mainstreaming in policymaking. When it comes to child rights mainstreaming, we still face challenges. This may also be due to the fact that we haven't yet created enough opportunities for children to meaningfully participate. But this is changing".

Mr Colin Scicluna, Head of Cabinet for Dubravka Šuica, Vice-President of the European Commission

The event was the first ever global discussion on child rights mainstreaming at the UN level involving civil society and child human rights defenders. It was an opportunity for our CAT to launch the child-friendly Guide ['Putting the Rights of Child Human Rights Defenders into Practice'](#). Child human rights defenders, who participated as co-moderators and panelists, highlighted how the lack of child rights mainstreaming, including at the UN, has consequences on their lives. They called for action to address these challenges, including through the use of [Child Rights Connect's](#) and [Amnesty International's](#) resources.



With the launch of this Guide we want the UN to make visible the importance of not only listening to us but also treating us with equal respect and providing us with security in our struggle. We ask the UN to use our Guide to understand the rights of children who are human rights defenders, which can help them to integrate children's rights across the board".

Rebeca, child advisor from El Salvador

As a result of this wide civil society mobilization, and just four weeks after receiving our [position paper](#), the Secretary-General took a milestone decision to develop a Guidance Note on child rights mainstreaming in the framework of his [Call to Action for Human Rights](#), as a first step towards addressing the system-wide approach to child rights in the UN. Former Assistant Secretary-General for Strategic Coordination, Mr. Volker Türk, addressed a [letter](#) to Child Rights Connect's President, welcoming the position paper and expressing agreement with the analysis that *"a holistic child rights perspective must be reinforced across the UN system at a global, regional and local level"*.

In response to this unprecedented step, we called for civil society and child participation in the development of the Guidance Note to ensure that the document will trigger positive change and be grounded in the everyday realities of children. This call has been heard as, in early 2022, the inter-agency process led by a core group of four UN entities – the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the two Special Representatives of the Secretary-General with a mandate focused on child rights – voiced their intention to reach out to as many actors as possible in the development of the Guidance Note and undertake wide consultations to that end in partnership with us.

We also advocated with States to act. Significantly, the UN General Assembly adopted a consensus resolution in December 2021 requesting *“all relevant organs, bodies, entities, organizations and mechanisms of the UN system to mainstream the promotion, respect, protection and fulfilment of the rights of the child throughout their activities, in accordance with their respective mandates, as well as to ensure that their staff are trained in child rights matters, and take further steps to increase system-wide coordination and inter-agency cooperation for the promotion and protection of the rights of the child”*. This language had been a standard recurring paragraph from previous resolutions that got lost over time. The fact that the States decided to re-introduce it reflects a renewed commitment to the issue and an intention to push the UN to do more.

We also inspired other actors to own and push for the same agenda. For instance, the European Network of Ombudpersons for Children submitted its [own letter to the Secretary-General](#) in November 2021, explicitly supporting our position paper and offering support to *“ensure that there is a UN-wide strategy on children’s rights in all UN decisions, policies, and practice”*.

While this is just the beginning of a multi-year process that will require long-term, multistakeholder engagement, these early results show how wide, coordinated, and sustained civil society advocacy, leveraging different entry points, can contribute to put key issues of concern on the agenda of the highest UN leadership, with potential spill-over effects on the prioritization of these issues by States. It also shows that coordination between advocacy in Geneva and New York is possible and should be strengthened at all levels, among civil society, States and UN agencies.



Three key achievements in 2021

1. We promoted the rights of child human rights defenders at the national level through a pilot project in Moldova

As experienced in the work of the Child Rights Information Centre Moldova (CRIC Moldova), a member of our Network, the activities of Moldovan child human rights defenders are not visible, and seldom supported. They are often unaware that they have the right to act, be empowered and protected as defenders and regularly face risks to their safety, including bullying, threats and intimidation. Civil and political rights of children are generally unknown and neglected. This is further fueled by the absence of a domestic law on the protection of human rights defenders and the lack of coordinated efforts among civil society.

In response to this, in 2021 Child Rights Connect and CRIC Moldova jointly initiated a new project aimed at advancing the realization of the rights of child human rights defenders in Moldova, through piloting the use of our [Implementation Guide: The Rights of Child Human Rights Defenders](#). We undertook capacity building for civil society organisations, children and the Children’s Ombudsperson covering topics such as civil and political rights, protecting child human rights defenders from harm, parents’/guardians’ rights and duties and access to justice. This was the first time that all these actors sat together to discuss the definition and the whole set of rights of child human rights defenders. It was also important to discuss different positions and find common ground in relation to sensitive issues such as political participation, as well as specific implementation issues where international standards are not clear enough (for example, setting a minimum age for children organising peaceful assemblies).

As a result, a situation analysis was developed which assessed good practices, gaps, challenges and recommendations, leading to the creation of a common action plan to identify priority actions and guide next steps. It was clear that awareness-raising was a priority, hence the recently launched campaign co-led with children on a safe and enabling environment for child human rights defenders. The situation analysis was also used to develop the very first civil society submission as part of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) focusing entirely on child human rights defenders. The report included children’s views and was supported by the Moldova Children’s Ombudsperson. CRIC empowered children to use the report for advocacy with States, including through the participation in the UPR pre-session at the end of 2021.

At the same time, Moldova’s National Human Rights Institution (The People’s Advocate) and the Children’s Ombudsperson launched a public call for a new law on human rights defenders and the Children’s Ombudsperson proposed for this Law to have a specific chapter on child human rights defenders. We endorsed a joint civil society submission led by CRIC to welcome the initiative and provided some key recommendations including for children’s participation throughout the process.

We also urged States to use the UPR to acknowledge and support this initiative, with the result that, during the Moldova's review in January 2022, Mexico called for the development of a comprehensive law on human rights defenders. The reply by the government of Moldova to the draft report of the UPR Working Group was promising as it ensured that the UPR recommendations will inform the next national human rights action plan and that civil society will be consulted. The impact of the UPR civil society report went far beyond the UPR as it prompted the Special Rapporteur on the situation of Human Rights Defenders to request a meeting with child human rights defenders to better understand their situation in Moldova and to learn from their experiences to inform her work.

The next steps include building the cooperation with the Children's Ombudsperson to help advance a child rights approach to the new law, bringing international support and attention to the process, continuing the strong focus on empowering child human rights defenders at the community and national level, using the forthcoming UPR recommendations to advance the activities of the common action plan and linking all this to the forthcoming review of Moldova by the CRC Committee.

Key lessons so far include:

- Our Implementation Guide provides a solid framework for advancing the implementation of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders and the UNCRC.
- The involvement of broader human rights organisations beyond the children's rights sector allows for thought-provoking discussions to help broaden collective knowledge and understanding of the context and the rights of child human rights defenders.
- Empowering children throughout the process is essential because this is their right, and for a more accurate understanding of the key challenges and priorities to focus on.
- Building allies at the international level brings attention and support for advocacy on child human rights defenders at the national level.

2. We empowered children to seek access to justice, including through the OPIC

Child human rights violations are on the rise, particularly given the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and escalating environmental crisis. Everywhere around the world, child victims of human rights violations face barriers in seeking redress, additional to those faced by adults, including social and legal barriers, often intersecting with gender-based, race/caste/ethnic, and socio-economic discrimination, to name a few. A critical step in addressing these deficiencies was taken through the adoption and entry into force in 2014 of the Optional Protocol to the UNCRC on a Communications Procedure (OPIC). This provides access to justice at the international level for child victims of human rights violations, where such violations cannot be addressed effectively at the national level. However, the effective use and impact of this instrument is challenged by a general

lack of awareness and understanding of its mechanisms, especially by children. This leaves countless child victims of human rights violations with lack of access to, or inadequate, remedies and reparation at all levels, which in turn feeds a cycle of impunity, discrimination and social injustice.

This is very much the case in Latin America, the second region with the highest number of OPIC ratifications but from which very few cases have been brought to the CRC Committee. In response to this, we teamed up with the Instituto Interamericano del Niño, Niña y Adolescentes (IIN-OEA) to conduct a capacity building workshop on the universal human rights system and the OPIC for 44 child members of Red Sur de Crianças e Adolescentes (RedSurca), which is the first network of children from the Child Permanent Commission ("Comisión Permanente NiñosSur") of the MERCOSUR (Mercado Común del Sur). This was established in 2020 to foster child participation in the decision-making processes of the regional economic entity. RedSurca includes child members from Argentina, Brazil, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Paraguay and Uruguay. These are all States parties to the OPIC thanks to the active push by the MERCOSUR. Building the capacity of this newly established network of children to use the international human rights system and the OPIC, the workshop was thus timely and the next logical step for the Child Permanent Commission of MERCOSUR. The workshop contributed to empower children at an individual level as well as a group through child friendly materials and interactive exercises.

This experience has further strengthened our partnership with the IIN-OEA, whose interim status as an Observer of the Child Rights Connect Network will be considered for validation by our General Assembly in June 2022. As a follow-up to the workshop for RedSurca, the IIN-OEA invited us to collaborate around their own capacity building programme for children. Specifically, we developed a complete and structured online training module on the OPIC which is now part of the IIN-OEA's training booklet used to train all children's networks partners and child advisors of the IIN-OEA. Given that some of these children are from countries which are yet to ratify the treaty, the training module aimed to build children's capacity both on how to advocate for OPIC ratification and how to use this instrument if a State has already ratified it.

In addition to empowering children through dedicated capacity building activities, we also used other strategic opportunities to do so, such as through the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. For the very first time, we co-organised a side event in the framework of the High-Level Political Forum, in partnership with UNICEF and the CRC Committee. The event focused on the topic "Equitable access to justice for all children". With our member CRIN, we empowered environmental child human rights defenders from the Republic of Korea to participate as panelists, jointly with the CRC Committee, the Deputy Children's Ombudsperson of Greece and a grassroots organisation from Ecuador. The event was a unique opportunity to raise awareness and advocate with States around the neglected issue of child access to justice.



In Korea, actually, there are many, many systems, like this constitutional appeal, that citizens can use to challenge human rights violations [...] But I think most of these systems actually fail to adequately help children because they are not built in a child-friendly way. Sometimes they use too complicated and vague terminology that is very difficult for a child to understand."

Dohyeon Kim, child human rights defender, Republic of Korea

3. We developed new strategies to follow up on recommendations from the CRC Committee through a pilot project in Palestine

Palestine ratified the OPIC in 2019, soon after having submitted its first report to the CRC Committee in September 2018. By doing so, it became the second State within the MENA region to ratify the OPIC. Palestine received its first Concluding Observations in February 2020, in which the ratification of the OPIC was explicitly welcomed by the Committee. This context was an ideal scenario to pilot an innovative capacity building programme focused on the follow up to the Concluding Observations of the CRC Committee through strategic use of the OPIC. In partnership with our member Save the Children, we conducted an online capacity building programme for the Palestinian Independent Commission for Human Rights and civil society organisations in Palestine.

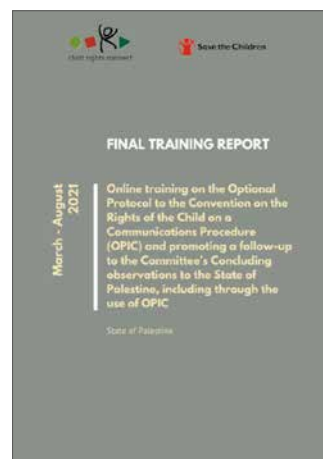
The aim of the programme was to strengthen the understanding of the OPIC by the Independent Commission for Human Rights and relevant civil society organisations, and to empower them to take action to advance the implementation of the Committee's recommendations, with a view to address the most pressing child rights issues and strengthen the national framework providing for child rights in Palestine. Participants had the chance to work together and develop an advocacy action plan around priority recommendations. The plan was developed in parallel to the government's action plan on the Concluding Observations and included shared responsibilities, advocacy strategies and a focal point leading activities to enhance coordination among non-State actors.

By working on practical case studies, participants learned how to strategically address a situation of a child rights violation identified in the Concluding Observations through the OPIC and other human rights mechanisms. What rights contained in the UNCRC have been violated? Would an individual communication to the CRC Committee under the OPIC be admissible? Are the violations systematic enough

for the Committee to initiate an inquiry procedure under the OPIC? Could a communication under the OPIC be useful to address the gaps identified in the Concluding Observations? What other human rights mechanisms could be used? These are some of the questions that were used to discuss real life scenarios about children with disabilities who are prevented from accessing education, and about child human rights defenders who are arbitrary detained and tortured.

This pilot capacity building experience has shown that there is a growing interest in considering the use of the OPIC not only to redress individual child rights violations but also to promote legal and policy. Not only did participants gain familiarity with the OPIC, including its limitations in addressing certain child rights violations, they also acquired an improved understanding of the most effective international human rights mechanisms to use depending on the case and the nature of Committee recommendations.

More widely, the capacity building programme contributed to improving coordination between civil society and the Independent Commission for Human Rights in advocacy for the promotion and protection of child rights in the State of Palestine. Discussions on the establishment of a permanent structure to coordinate between these organisations were initiated. This could lead to enhanced monitoring of, and reporting on, the implementation of child rights in Palestine. The participation of State representatives in the training also provided a concrete example of the OPIC as an instrument to build capacity within the State for the improvement of national laws and policies providing for child rights, demystifying political misconceptions about the instrument.



Additional programme highlights

2021 A YEAR IN REVIEW

Training on the Simplified Reporting Procedure of the CRC Committee for +50 Save the Children and local partner representatives

Publication of new multilingual tool "Positive discipline, an alternative to corporal punishment"

TB-Net statement to the 33rd Meeting of Chairs of the Human Rights Treaty Bodies

CRCnct signed up the **Together to #ENDviolence Leaders' Statement**

Child rights mainstreaming: Position paper to the UN Secretary-General **Joint event** with Amnesty International around the 76th session of the General Assembly

High level conference to advance children's rights in the Caribbean

JAN

FEB

MAR

APR

MAY

JUN

JUL

AUG

SEP

OCT

NOV

DEC

Empowerment of +80 children's rights defenders, including 22 children, in engaging with the CRC Committee (86th session)

Annual coordination meeting with the CRC Committee

Historic child participation at the Annual Day on the Rights of the Child on the SDGs (Human Rights Council) supported by CRCnct

First capacity-building workshop on CHRDs' rights for CSOs and the Children's Ombudsperson in Moldova (using CRCnct's guide)

Side-event on Equitable access to justice for all children during the High Level Political Forum on sustainable development

CRC Committee Day of General Discussion on Child Rights and Alternative Care with support from CRCnct on child participation

World Children's Day: call to re-focus on the human rights of children & **launch of "Together with Children"**

1. We scaled up the publication of resources and tools for child human rights defenders

Child-friendly resources and tools on the international human rights system are far from being enough and fail to respond to the increasing needs and demands from the fast-growing movement of child human rights defenders who engage with the UN or wish to do so. With our [Strategic Plan 2020-2024](#), we stepped up our efforts to address this gap and develop more [child-friendly resources](#). In 2021, we published the child-friendly version of the [Implementation Guide on the rights of child human rights defenders](#), in English, French and Spanish. The child-friendly Guide was developed in partnership with Queen's University of Belfast and our Children's Advisory Team, who was instrumental to enriching the Guide with concrete examples from real life of children globally. The child advisors actively used and disseminated the Guide among their peers, and other relevant stakeholders including States and the UN.



The drafting of the child friendly guide has educated me well on how safe child human rights defenders should feel when in work. It never occurred to me before that children have the right to feel free to express their views and to feel safe when standing up for what they believe in".

Melaia, child advisor from Fiji



With the launch of this guide we want the UN to make visible the importance of not only listening to us but also treating us with equal respect and providing us with security in our struggle. We ask the UN to use our Guide to understand the rights of children who are human rights defenders, which can help them to integrate children's rights across the board".

Rebeca, child advisor from El Salvador



One of the points that I consider most important in the guide is the one that talks about differences, especially when talking about disability, many people think that people with disabilities have no opinion or are less because they have some function less than the others. people. This is an effect of the lack of child rights mainstreaming. Even people with intellectual disabilities can contribute, since they have another way of seeing the world. If you support child human rights defenders, never invalidate a person who seems less, appearances are deceiving".

Jorge, child advisor from Bolivia

Together with the [original version](#), the Guide constitutes the key pillar of our [new website on child human rights defenders](#) that was published at the end of 2021 and launched during the event on child rights mainstreaming at the UN General Assembly. This new website has already become the main resource center for all those who work for the rights of child human rights defenders. It includes awareness raising and interactive tools, as well as a specific [learning space for children](#). In this section of the website, children have the possibility to strengthen their knowledge and advocacy capacity through four online modules on: 1) the right to defend the environment; 2) how to report to the CRC Committee; 3) how to report as part of the UPR; and 4) defending human rights in the digital environment. All modules are accessible online in English, French and Spanish.

In 2021, we also developed a [child-friendly version of the Internal Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination](#) (ICERD), which was launched on Human Rights Day and on the 20th anniversary of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action. Our peer TB-Net member, the International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR), approached us and shared its concerns about the complete lack of child-friendly materials on international standards related to racial discrimination. This was an unacceptable gap given the human rights violations that children are subjected to but also the recent and increasing mobilization of child human rights defenders in response to global movements such as #BlackLivesMatter. We thus initiated a collaboration to develop the first ever child-friendly version of the ICERD and its main standards.

The ICERD was the first of the core international human rights instruments adopted in 1965 and outlines the specific human rights of people of African-descent, minorities, indigenous peoples, people discriminated on the basis of caste or descent, stateless persons, and migrants including refugees and asylum-seekers. Yet it remains unknown to children and most adults outside the field of human rights. The purpose of this new resource is to serve as a material for human rights education for the general public, especially for

children, to learn the international human rights standards against racial discrimination including the State obligations. It is designed to be a practical tool for civil society and other stakeholders for promoting public awareness on the Convention and supporting the activities of child human rights defenders, including their engagement with the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, which is yet to be seen.

The child-friendly version covers up to 34 Articles of the Convention and Key General Recommendations on specific groups (indigenous people, Roma, African Descent, Non-citizens) in English, French and Spanish. It has been the result of efforts from child human rights defenders across all regions (Mexico, Peru, Switzerland, South Korea, Bangladesh and members of our global Children's Advisory Team) who took time to review the text and design.

2. We expanded the participation of children at the Human Rights Council

The Human Rights Council has historically been seen as a space not fit for children. Too formal, too intimidating, too technical, too risky, too political. Negative assumptions about children's capacity to engage with the Council are considered by many as perfectly legitimate. As a result, there continues to be a predominantly 'paternalistic and protectionist' approach towards children rather than a balance with empowering children to access civil society space as equal stakeholders and as human rights defenders, in line with the Secretary-General's Guidance Note on civic space.

"Better to have a video than a child on the panel – it is more meaningful", "Better to bring a 19-year-old than a child to avoid child safeguarding procedures", "The child panelist has to represent the widest group of children, otherwise it would not be legitimate child participation", or "It is better for children to engage with the CRC Committee which is more child-friendly". We hear these comments come from all sides – civil society, States, as well as UN agencies – having a significant impact on children's ability to engage. Practical challenges and barriers exist for children to participate at the Council, largely due to the absence of a framework or specific modalities for child participation. However, 2021 was a milestone year to demonstrate that child participation can happen and should become something "normal", in the spirit of the Secretary-General's Guidance Note and the CRC Committee standards.

2021 was a particularly favorable year for our advocacy because the Annual full-day meeting on the rights of the child in March focused on children's rights and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). This had been the theme of the 2017 resolution on the rights of the child, which called on States to facilitate the meaningful participation and active consultation of children in all issues affecting them related to the implementation, monitoring, follow-up and review of the 2030 Agenda. Building on this and the annual report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) on a child rights perspective to the implementation of Sustainable Development Goals to the High-Level Political Forum, we mobilized our members to make the most out of these opportunities and create synergies between them to advance child participation.

We established a Taskforce on child rights and the Sustainable Development Goals composed of nine Network members who actively mobilized children from around the world to take part in and inform these processes. Overall, 17 national and regional children's consultations allowed close to 450 children between the ages of 6 and 17 years old, from 25 different countries covering all regions, to share their views on how to realise children's rights through the Sustainable Development Goals. Following the consultations, the Taskforce assisted the OHCHR in organising two online dialogues with representatives of these groups, selected through a peer-to-peer processes. A total of 30 children, aged 10 to 17 years old from 15 different countries, participated in the dialogues.

For the first time, to identify child panelists for the Annual Full-Day Meeting on the Rights of the Child of the Human Rights Council, the OHCHR issued a call for interest with clear, transparent and objective criteria addressed to the children who had participated in the online dialogues. Two children were subsequently selected as panelists of the Annual Day. For the first time, two children in street situations addressed the Human Rights Council. "My hope today is that world leaders take the question of poverty, inequality and climate action very seriously because it affects children most. If nothing is done, then all your efforts to ensure the protection and promotion of children's rights will be forgotten and this shall affect the development and future of children", said Fred, a child human rights defender from Save Street Children Uganda. "When I was voted by my peers in the Child Rights Club to represent other children living and working on the street and speak on the Annual Day, I felt so empowered. When I spoke, I could hear my voice echo in the whole room. There and then, I knew I had taken one step to making the world a better place for thousands of children across in the world. I remember on that day, my peers sat and watched the event live. From that time on, we have strengthened our ability in demanding for our rights. We are the change we want to see every day".

Additionally, following a civil society practice of giving speaking slots to children, we undertook informal advocacy with the Permanent Missions to the UN of Fiji and Slovenia – two child rights champions at the Human Rights Council – to encourage them to be the first States to give their speaking slot to children at the Annual Day. Both Fiji and Slovenia, who already collaborated at the national level with child human rights defenders and their networks, seized the opportunity and worked on this pilot with great commitment.



I am grateful for this opportunity given to me by the Government of Fiji to share my views. In participating, I urge all parents, mentors, and leaders to please continue to create spaces for your children to engage in policy making".

Gerard, a child from Fiji



In my country there are organizations educating children about democracy and active citizenship, encouraging us to participate and are helping us be heard and be taken seriously”.

Bilal, a child from Slovenia

As a result, the 2021 Annual Day was marked by historic child participation, with a total of seven children taking part in the event. To make this an empowering experience, we provided technical assistance to all the adults and children involved, including on safeguarding best practices, and we organised a meeting among the child participants for them to coordinate. To echo and reinforce their messages, we delivered a statement through the voice of Save the Children, calling on States to adopt a child rights approach to the Sustainable Development Goals through protecting, empowering and investing in children.

The outcomes of the consultations with children also contributed to inform the development of the OHCHR report to the High-Level Political Forum, as well as the joint advocacy paper of our Taskforce which was submitted to the European Union and Uruguay to inform the General Assembly resolution on the rights of the child (also focused, in 2021, on the Sustainable Development Goals).

3. We contributed to maintaining civil society’s motivation and engagement with the reporting process of the CRC Committee in an increasingly challenging context

In 2021, the persistence of the pandemic further reduced opportunities for bringing States to account through the reporting cycle of the CRC Committee, aggravating the gap in the monitoring of States’ obligations under the UNCRC and its Optional Protocols. Overall, the Committee held three pre-sessions with civil society but with a reduced number of countries compared to previous years. In total, six States were reviewed in 2021, contributing to a large and increasing backlog which has a pervasive impact on the work of civil society. A national civil society organisation explained how *“The reporting cycle with its constructive dialogue at the pre-session is an indispensable tool for [them] in [their] efforts to implement children’s rights”* and how *“any further delay would be an impediment for the initiated process and the increased public awareness of children’s rights”*.

To respond to these challenges, and despite difficulties posed by a fully online environment, we boosted our longstanding mandate of strengthening the capacity of children’s rights defenders, including children, to use the reporting process of the CRC Committee as an advocacy tool. Civil society relied on us more than ever before, in a context where the level of uncertainty around session schedules had never been so high. In 2021, we constantly monitored the Committee’s agenda and shared information through all communication channels to mobilize as many civil society organisations and children as possible, with a focus on regions and countries that are under-represented in engagement with the CRC Committee, in line with findings from our 2019 [*Global Study on the Status of Engagement in Reporting to CRC Committee*](#).

For example, to foster engagement in the Caribbean, we co-organised an online high-level conference in partnership with CARICOM-Caribbean Community, the Inter-American Children’s Institute and the Movimiento Mundial por la Infancia to raise awareness about the international and regional human rights systems. This was the first event in many years to bring together relevant actors in the Caribbean, including child human rights defenders, representatives from different States, civil society, UN agencies, academics and international experts, to identify how accountability mechanisms, including the CRC Committee, can foster the promotion of child rights in the region. One of the outcomes was that participants identified the need to support the establishment of national civil society coalitions along with a regional network of national coalitions. This was particularly encouraged by the inspiring experience-sharing from the CEDAW Committee of Trinidad and Tobago who brings women’s rights NGOs together to effectively engage with the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW).

We also continued to support the engagement of another under-represented region, namely the Pacific. While progress in the region was heavily affected by the pandemic and climate change effects, we pursued capacity building of civil society and Ombudspersons as follow-up to the 2020 CRC Committee extraordinary session in Samoa. As a first step, we convened a webinar for our members and partners to mobilize and foster collaboration amongst key stakeholders ahead of the forthcoming UN reporting cycles targeting countries in the region. We supported the Ombudsperson Office in Samoa with reporting as part of the UPR, as well as Save the Children Fiji in preparing a civil society submission to the CRC Committee under its optional methodology, the Simplified Reporting Procedure.

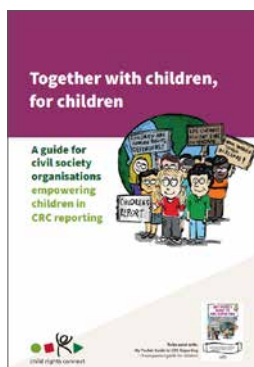
In 2021, we received a record number of requests for targeted capacity building and technical assistance from members and partner civil society organisations. These mainly focused on child participation in reporting to the CRC Committee, the Simplified Reporting Procedure, and how to follow-up on the implementation of the Committee’s Concluding Observations. Overall, through more than 20 online workshops on these topics, we equipped several hundred of children’s rights defenders from all regions, including Network members and other civil society organisations, children, academics, representatives from National Human Rights Institutions, and representatives from UN agencies (particularly UNICEF), with new or improved knowledge, know-how, confidence and connections.

"I was very confused [with the Simplified Reporting Procedure] and I feel that several aspects are now clear to me" (a defender from Venezuela). "The possibility of an exchange made it possible to understand the new procedure globally, its stages and calendar. Sharing problems and advice with other coalitions and networks was very important" (defender from Uruguay). Feedback from a colleague from Save the Children, following a training workshop on the Simplified Reporting Procedure for Save the Children staff and their national partners from around the world highlights how "this good and concrete example of how [Child Rights Connect] empowers [its members]" was then used for briefing other stakeholders, showing replication and continuity of the training gains: "I have used your presentation content for a human rights course led by Save the Children Italy at Padua University in March on the Simplified Reporting Procedure and intro to the Universal Periodic Review".

Significantly, adult defenders were empowered to ensure safe, empowering and sustained child participation in reporting to the CRC Committee through the updating of our Guide *"Together with children"*. Emblematic of this is what Luigi, a young adult from Guatemala who had engaged in reporting to the Committee as a child, and now empowers Guatemalan children to do so, said during the launch event:



We used the guide that Child Rights Connect shared with us to learn about other countries' examples in using methodologies of consultation with children and adolescents and thus be able to create our own methodologies. Subsequently, [we used the guide] to understand the simplified reporting process with a facilitating group composed of children and adolescents that participated in the reporting process in the past, for whom it was important to understand the simplified [reporting] process in a simple way. In the third place, [we used the guide] to explain the reporting process to the children who were participating in it, so they could understand the destination of their opinions and evaluations regarding the fulfillment of their rights. Moreover, [we used the guide] to multiply the debate about the reporting cycle. Another benefit that we also obtained thanks to the Child Rights Connect guide was to identify our allies to have greater contact with the UN Child Rights Committee. It is difficult for some countries or organized groups of children and adolescents to understand how to send reports to the Committee. Thanks to that guide, it was much easier to get in touch with Child Rights Connect and make that liaison to share our documents, ideas, and contributions."



4. We responded to children's calls and actions for a healthy environment and climate justice

The world is experiencing an unprecedented mobilization of children acting to demand urgent action to address the ever-escalating climate crisis, which severely affects the lives of children and their future, amongst others. So far, however, children's voices have been largely ignored, as recognized by the Chair of the CRC Committee at the 76th session of the General Assembly in October 2021:



For years, children have been asking national and world leaders and decision-makers to stop making empty promises and listen to the views and experiences of children when formulating and implementing policies and programmes on the environment and climate change. For years, their voices calling for climate justice have been largely ignored".

Not only have environmental child human rights defenders' voices being ignored but, increasingly, they are being silenced, including in the most brutal ways, as recently experienced in Colombia where a 11-year-old received threats against his life and a 14 year-old indigenous, environmental activist was murdered.

To respond to this, we sought to influence political consensus-building and standard-setting at the international level. 2020 and 2021 were instrumental years for making the healthy environment a child rights concern, particularly at the Human Rights Council. Together with our Working Group on children's rights and the environment we joined forces with a large civil society coalition to undertake advocacy for the recognition of the right to a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment as a human right, essential to advancing children's rights. As a result, the Council adopted [resolution 48/13](#), which recognized such right for the first time. The group of States leading on the drafting and negotiations of the resolution (Costa Rica, the Maldives, Slovenia and Switzerland) addressed a thank you letter to Child Rights Connect expressing their gratitude through these words:



This historic achievement was accomplished with the partnership and unwavering support of the global civil society. In that regard we are pleased to acknowledge the hard work, dedication and commitment of your organisation in realising this milestone and wish to convey our earnest gratitude to each and every member of your organisation. Through you, we would also like to express our sincere appreciation to other civil society organisations, the Indigenous Peoples, children and youth movements, social movements and local communities that worked with you at the grass root level to recognise this right. The formal recognition of this right will certainly pave the way for more ambitious environmental commitments by all, and help to strengthen its intrinsic linkages with several other human rights”.

In parallel, we began preparations in 2021 with our members for supporting the development of the new General Comment of the CRC Committee focusing on children’s rights and the environment with a special focus on climate change, particularly with a view to ensure safe, empowering and sustained child participation in the development of this new authoritative guidance.

While this is an evolving but established practice of the CRC Committee, child participation is still ad-hoc in the work of the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council. In 2021, we succeeded in influencing the resolution on the renewal of the Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment that now includes an explicit reference to the need for the mandate to consult with children and youth in its work, and reasserts State obligations to respect, protect and fulfil human rights, including child rights, when addressing climate change. This is a major win as the initial text only expressed deep concern at the threats that environmental degradation poses for persons in vulnerable situations, including children, as well as the recognition of the specific vulnerability of children to the effects of environmental harm. Similarly, we influenced the resolution establishing a new UN mandate, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change. This will allow the Council to give focused and systematic attention to the impact of the climate change crisis on human rights and better respond to it. Following joint advocacy from Child Rights Connect’s Working Group and the Children’s Environmental Rights Initiative (CERI), the new Special Rapporteur has been mandated to consult with children and youth when discharging the mandate.

Last but not least, we directly empowered environmental child human rights defenders in different ways. In partnership with the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), we developed a training module for children on the right to defend the environment. Available in English, French and Spanish, this module is included in the learning space for children of our [new website on child human rights defenders](#). The module aims to empower environmental child human rights defenders by strengthening their knowledge of their rights as defenders and their capacity to advocate and act, including calling for climate justice and seeking justice for the violations of their own rights as human rights defenders. In parallel, we supported UNEP to develop its institutional capacity to mainstream children’s rights and act in a child sensitive and responsive manner. Specifically, we started to develop the child-friendly version of UNEP’s draft policy on human rights defenders, and the internal procedure for UNEP staff on a child-focused implementation of the policy. The child-friendly version of the policy will allow children to become aware of this policy and to report violations of their rights. The child-focused internal procedure will empower UNEP staff to respond to allegations of violations reported by children in an appropriate manner. We also worked with UNEP around the development and implementation of the [joint commitment by the Heads of UN entities](#) to promote child participation in all environmental matters.

On the front of climate justice litigation, we engaged around the so-called “[climate change case](#)” (*Sacchi et al v. Argentina et al*) brought by 16 child petitioners before the CRC Committee under the OPIC. We supported and helped facilitate child participation in the first ever oral hearings conducted by the CRC Committee. We also provided advice to the Committee and OHCHR on how to conduct the hearing. While the case was found inadmissible for failure to exhaust domestic remedies, it was the first time an international body issued a ruling on climate inaction, which could set a precedent in several, significant ways. To highlight the positive elements of the decisions, we publicized a legal analysis of their content, scope and potential impact.



5. We reinforced international standards on the rights of child human rights defenders

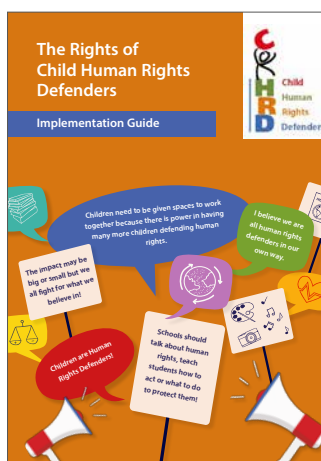


The strongest voices pushing back against the status quo, and in favour of more meaningful climate action, have come from civil society, including indigenous peoples, young people, children and other communities that have experienced the impact of the crisis. Unfortunately, instead of receiving support, climate justice advocates have been attacked both by States and by business interests. Urgent attention is needed at the local, national, regional and international levels to ensure that those fighting for climate justice receive the support they deserve, as a means of respecting their rights and ensuring that their struggles for climate action and a just transition are recognized and supported."

These are powerful words from the Special Rapporteur on freedom of peaceful assembly and association, included in his [report](#) "Exercise of the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association as essential to advancing climate justice". Given the general lack of international standards on the rights of child human rights defenders, we made a submission to support the Special Rapporteur to integrate a child rights perspective into his 2021 report to the UN General Assembly. Referring our submission, which was developed in collaboration with the independent consultant Anita Danko, the Special Rapporteur wholeheartedly denounced that children face particular challenges in exercising their rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association in the context of the climate crisis. In addition to having to confront all the obstacles faced by adults, they often face barriers affecting specifically children, including limitations imposed based on discriminatory policies and practices as well as negative reactions from their schools, including various forms of punishment. Such rights violations have often been condoned and supported by authorities.

At the end of his report the Special Rapporteur recommends that States put in place transparent and inclusive processes to ensure that everyone, including children, is provided with equal opportunities to effectively participate in climate decision-making. This means eliminating existing barriers and adopting positive measures to ensure that marginalized communities are provided with specific, meaningful opportunities to exercise the full extent of these rights in the context of climate justice.

Coming from a mandate that has contributed to the development of our [Implementation Guide on the rights of child human rights defenders](#), this report is particularly important to advance the international standards around one of the most essential but neglected rights that children exercise when acting as human rights defenders, namely the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and association. Looking ahead, we will push for further strengthening of these standards in the forthcoming CRC Committee General Comment on "Children's rights and the environment with a special focus on climate change."



2021 in numbers

Publications and communications

8 new/updated multilingual resources published to help children engage with the UN (5 tools) and adults to engage or support children to engage with the UN (3 tools)

>61K users of our websites in total (12% increase compared to 2020)

19.5% increase in the number of Twitter followers, and 100% increase in the number of followers of our Facebook page

Network engagement

86 network members

24 online workshops and webinars held with/for our members in total

+100 *MemberNews* and email blasts issued to our members in support of their work

Child Human Rights Defenders (CHRDs)

16 child advisors, members of our CAT, empowered as human rights defenders to shape and take forward activities on child rights

+20 online workshops (co)organised on CHRDs' rights, and child participation and safeguarding

+400 civil society representatives, children, other non-State actors, UN officials and State representatives participated in these workshops

CRC reporting

189 civil society submissions in respect to the 32 countries which pre-session or session were held during the year

39 civil society reports led or informed by children

206 children's right defenders, including 54 children (of whom 38 were girls) empowered to report to the CRC Committee

OPIC

+470 state representatives, children/CHRDs, Network members' representatives, other CSO representatives, other non-State actors, academics and diplomats were briefed on the OPIC

2 new State parties ratified the instrument

22 adopted decisions by the CRC Committee under OPIC, of which 7 decisions were on the merits finding human rights violations

1st oral hearings ever held by the CRC Committee, including with children

Working groups

As mentioned in the 2020 public annual report, the Working Group on children without appropriate parental care was to streamline its activities with the Global Collaborative Platform on Transforming Children's Care. As a result, while individual Working Group members have been involved in discrete initiatives around care reform, including the CRC Committee Day of General Discussion on children in alternative care and engaging with the Global Collaborative Platform, the Working Group has not undertaken collective action in 2021. A meeting was held to discuss the future of the Working Group, and decisions will soon be taken. This report does not include any updates from that Working Group.

Working group on child participation (established in mid-2021)

Composition

Conveners: World Vision International & Child Rights Information Centre Moldova

Members: Alliance of NGOs active in Field of Child and Family Protection Moldova, Child Rights Coalition Asia, Defence for Children International Costa Rica, Edmund Rice, Eurochild, Family for Every Child, Internatiaonal, EKAMA Development Foundation Tansania, Elizabeth Fry Society of Greater Vancouver Canada, Humanium, International Child Rights Centre (in CRC) Korea, Kindernothilfe Germany, Plan International, Plataforma de Organizaciones de Infancia Spain, Save the Children International, SOS Children's Villages International, Terre des Hommes International Federation, World Vision International

Observers: CRIN, Lumos

Strategic partners: Queen's University Belfast

Key outputs

- Established a mandate that lays out the Working Group rationale, goals, and the action plan for 2022 as well as nominated two co-conveners
- Contributed to the dissemination of '[Together with Children](#)', a Child Rights Connect guide for adults supporting children to engage in reporting to the CRC Committee
- Supported the drafting and submission to the OHCHR consultation on its Guidelines on participation

Looking ahead

- Pilot a child participation strategy for child participation in the Working Group
- Engagement with the CRC Committee Working Group on child participation and the upcoming General Comment 26, and advise and support its actions
- Joint advocacy and follow-up to Save the Children's 'Decide with Us' report

- Support the child participation process for the development of the upcoming UN Guidance Note on child rights mainstreaming
- Develop a policy brief for Geneva and New York diplomats (targeting UN diplomats) on advancing child participation language in UN resolutions
- Roll-out the [child-friendly Implementation Guide on the Rights of Child Human Rights Defenders](#) and pilot activities at country level on child human rights defenders

Working group on children and armed conflict

Composition

Conveners: Defence for Children International (DCI)

Members: Arigatou International, Child Rights International Network (CRIN), Defence for Children International, ECPAT International, Geneva Call, Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack; Humanium, Plan International, Save the Children, Terre des Hommes International Federation, War Child UK and the Netherlands, World Vision International, and Women's World Summit Foundation

Observers: Reprieve and Watchlist

Key outputs

- Convened a meeting with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (SRSG CAAC) in November 2021 to discuss: (i) the Secretary-General's annual report on children and armed conflict; (ii) how to increase cooperation with the Geneva Group of Friends on children and armed conflict and the SRSG CAAC; (iii) suggestions for the next report of the SRSG CAAC to the 49th session of the Human Rights Council; (iv) a 2022 focus on the promotion of the ratification and implementation of the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (OPAC); and (v) the report and events around the 25th anniversary of the OPAC

- Delivered a joint statement during the 46th session of the Human Rights Council, Item 3 on children and armed conflict. The statement was also co-sponsored by Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International
- Participated in information sessions on children and armed conflict organised by the SRSB CAAC and Geneva Group of Friends on children and armed conflict

Looking ahead

- Further contribute to the implementation of the recommendations from the [Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty](#) focussing on children and armed conflict
- Gradually build a unified civil society voice/position on issues related to children and armed conflict and build more bridges between Geneva and New York institutions working on these issues, including through regular communication with Watchlist
- Engage in relevant UN processes/with relevant UN actors, such as through delivering a joint statement around the 49th session of the Human Rights Council, regularly participating in the meetings of the Geneva Group of Friends on children and armed conflict where relevant resolutions of the Human Rights Council are discussed, resuming face-to-face meetings with the SRSB CAAC, and participating in events around the 25th anniversary of the OPAC

Working group on children of incarcerated parents

Composition

Conveners: Plataforma NNAPES & Quaker United Nations Office

Members: Children of Prisoners Europe, Defence for Children International and DCI Costa Rica, Elizabeth Fry Society, Plataforma NNAPES, Quaker United Nations Office, REPR, SOS Children's Villages International and BICE

Observers: Penal Reform International, INCCIP, and the Chicago School of Professional Psychology or Illinois School Psychology Association (ISPA)

Key outputs

- Convened a [session](#) on children of incarcerated parents during the 14th UN Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice in March with Working Group representatives from Latin America and Europe, along with the Chair of the CRC Committee (as the only session which tackled this issue)
- Actively contributed to drafting, publishing and disseminating a [pledge for child rights in criminal justice](#) around the 14th UN Congress on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice
- Together with Geneva-based staff of the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), finalized the concept note of the Global Toolkit on Children of Incarcerated Parents and presented it to potential donors

- As part of the follow up to the UN Congress, delivered a statement during a session of the Thematic Discussions of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice on the implementation of the Kyoto Declaration.
- Supported a process of participation of around 60 children and young people with incarcerated parents from five countries in Latin America and the Caribbean to analyse the recommendations issued by the CRC Committee 10 years ago around its Day of General Discussion on Children with Incarcerated Parents
- Participated in the three-day third virtual biannual conference of the Working Group observer INCCIP, which counted with young people, members of the CRC Committee, renowned researchers on the issue, and more than 200 practitioners.
- Participated in / submitted inputs as part of different UN processes, for example to the report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to privacy, and prior and during the Day of General Discussion of the CRC Committee on children in alternative care

Looking ahead

- Support UNODC with fundraising based on the Global Toolkit Concept Note
- Continue submitting information on children with incarcerated parents to the UN human rights system
- Follow up and participate in activities related to the Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty
- Continue building the relationship and involving the CRC Committee on activities organised by the Working Group and/or its members

Working group on children's rights and the environment

Composition

Conveners: Terre des Hommes & CRIN

Members: Austrian National Coalition, Terre des Hommes, CRC Asia, Make Mother Matter, Humanium, Save the Children, Human Rights Watch, Associated Country Women of the World, CRIN, Plan International, Franciscans International, and World Vision International

Observers: Project Dryad

Key outputs

- Influenced the adoption of the Human Rights Council [resolution 48/13](#) recognising the right to a healthy environment, by coordinating statements with other groups and undertaking direct advocacy. Thanks to these efforts, this resolution built on [resolution 45/30 on realizing the rights of the child through a healthy environment](#) which urged States to take the necessary measures to protect children's rights from environmental harm as well as ensure that children are at the core of environmental decision-making

- Supported the creation of the Special Rapporteur on human rights and climate change as new UN mandate. Following this advocacy, children and youth have been included in the related resolution among the groups that the new mandate holder should engage and consult with
- With a view to mainstream children's rights in relevant UN bodies, convened a meeting with the new mandate holder of the Special Rapporteur on toxics and human rights
- Started to engage with the relevant CRC Committee Working group on the development of the new General Comment 26 on children's rights and the environment with a focus on climate change (including through an introductory and capacity building meeting in February)
- Coordinated the engagement of different members around the 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26)
- Supported the process of drafting different tools and publications produced by members of the Working Group with the aim to advance State accountability on children's environmental rights (such as Save the Children's "How to child rights" tool on the use of resolution 45/30 and case study on the UPR; the online module on environmental child human rights defenders of Child Rights Connect; and the Children's Environmental Rights Initiative's UPR toolkit)
- Supported the translation and piloting in Albania and Ivory Coast of the Children's Environmental Rights Initiative's tool on reporting on child rights and the environment to the CRC Committee

Looking ahead

- Actively follow and contribute to the development by the CRC Committee of its General Comment 26 (two members of the WG will sit in the advisory board and coordinate inputs from the Working Group)
- Continue to engage with relevant Treaty bodies and Charter Bodies, in particular the CRC Committee Working Group on child rights and the environment and relevant Special Procedures (statements in support of child rights mainstreaming, meetings, side events, etc.)
- Continue to engage with civil society organisations, including child-led and environmental rights advocacy groups to ensure that advocacy led by the Working Group is grounded on the different conditions of children and their communities
- Launch, disseminate and pilot the use, at country level, of the practical tools developed by the Working Group and its members in 2021. This includes developing a child-friendly version of the Human Rights Council resolution 45/30 (as part of the guidance on how to write child-friendly information developed under Save the Children's "How to Child Rights" series)
- Explore more ways to enhance proactive exchange of information and knowledge, ownership and active engagement of Working Group members in the activities of the Working Group

Working group on children and violence

Composition

Conveners: Arigatou International & World Vision International

Members: Arigatou International, ATD Fourth World, Bureau International Catholique de l'enfance (BICE) Defence for Children International and DCI Costa Rica, ECPAT, Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, Plan International, Save the Children, Terre des Hommes International, Women's World Summit Foundation, War Child Holland, World Vision International, and the World Organization Against Torture (OMCT)

Observers: World Council of Churches

Strategic partners: UNICEF, Office of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Violence Against Children, and Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children

Key outputs

- Delivered an oral statement during the Interactive Dialogue of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children (SRSG VAC) as part of the 46th session of the Human Rights Council
- Engaged with the SRSG VAC and CRC Committee to share findings of the 2020 Working Group analysing how violence against children has been addressed in 47 countries through the concluding observations of the CRC Committee, the UPR recommendations and resolutions of the Human Rights Council
- Conducted nine internal meetings to develop the corresponding advocacy strategy of the Working Group, based on the recommendations of the above-cited report. The strategy was finalized and presented to Child Rights Connect in October. The Working Group also developed an action plan with priority actions to operationalize the strategy in 2021 onwards

Looking ahead

- Actively engage at the 49th session of the Human Rights Council including through an oral statement during the Interactive Dialogue of the SRSG VAC and side event organised together with this UN mandate
- Further develop the Working Group advocacy strategy in particular the key messages and an infographic summarising the main elements of the strategy
- Implement the advocacy strategy, in particular develop the booklet on best practices together with the SRSG VAC office and the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children, an action prone blog and coordinated messages

Organisation

Members



African Child Policy Forum, Ethiopia



Alliance for Children Mauritius, Mauritius



Aliance za dětská práva (Alliance for the Rights of the Child)



Alliance of NGOs active in the field of Child and Family Social Protection (APSCF), Moldova



Arigatou International, Switzerland



Baha'i International Community, USA



Bir Dünya Çocuk Derneği (Children of One World), Turkey



Campaña Latinoamericana por el Derecho a la Educación (CLADE)



Centre of Excellence in Alternative Care of Children, India



Child's Destiny and Development Organization (CHIDDO)



Child Rights Coalition Asia



Child Rights International Network (CRIN), United Kingdom



Child Rights Network Switzerland, Switzerland



ChildPact, Romania



Children Advocacy Network (CAN-Pakistan), Pakistan



Children of Prisoners Europe (COPE), France



Children's Parliament, Scotland, United Kingdom



Children's Rights Alliance, Ireland



Children's Rights Alliance for England (CRAE), United Kingdom



Conseil Français des Associations pour les Droits de l'Enfant (COFRADE), France



Consortium for Street Children (CSC), United Kingdom



Defence for Children International (DCI), Switzerland



Defence for Children International Costa Rica (DCI), Costa Rica



Edmund Rice International, Switzerland



EKAMA Development Foundation, Tanzania



Elizabeth Fry Society of Greater Vancouver, Canada



Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation, USA



ECPAT International, Thailand



Eurochild, Belgium



European Association for Children in Hospital (EACH), Switzerland



Family for Every Child



Franciscans International, Switzerland



Friends International Suisse, Switzerland



Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC) (QUNO), Switzerland



Halley Movement



Heirs to our Ocean



Hope and Homes for Children, United Kingdom



Human Rights Watch, USA



Humanium, Switzerland



IDAY



Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion, Netherlands



International Association of Youth and Family Judges and Magistrates (IAYFJM/AIMJF), Switzerland



International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN/ GIFA), Switzerland



International Catholic Child Bureau (BICE), Switzerland



International Child Rights Center (InCRC), Korea



International Council of Women (ICW/CIF), France



International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), Switzerland



International Foster Care Organization, Ireland (IFCO), Ireland



International Movement "ATD Fourth World", France



International Play Association, United Kingdom



International School Psychology Association (ISPA)



International Social Service (ISS), Switzerland



Kinderrechtencoalitie Vlaanderen (Coalition of children's rights NGOs in Flanders), Belgium



Kindernothilfe



Korea Council of Children's Organizations (KOCCO)



Lumos, United Kingdom



Make Mothers Matter, France



Marista Solidarity International Foundation (FMSI), Switzerland



National Coalition for the Implementation of the UN-Convention on the Rights of the Child in Austria



National Coalition Germany, Germany



Niñas, Niños,
Adolescentes con Padres
Encarcelados (NNAPES),
Uruguay



Our Children Opatija,
Croatia



Plan International,
United Kingdom



Plataforma de
Organizaciones de
Infancia, Spain



Plateforme CDE Maroc



Proyecto Solidario, Spain



Railway Children, East
Africa office, United
Kingdom



Red Latinoamericana de
Acogimiento (RELAF),
Argentina



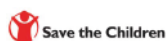
Red Latinoamericana y
Caribeña por la defensa de
los derechos de los niños,
niñas, y adolescentes
(REDLAMYC), Mexico



Relais Enfants Parents
Romands (REPR),
Switzerland



Roshni Homes Trust,
Pakistan



Save the Children,
International



SOS Children's Villages
International,
Switzerland / Austria



Tanzania Child Rights
Forum, Tanzania



Terre des Hommes
International Federation,
Switzerland



The Learning for
Well-being Foundation



The Malta Foundation
for the Wellbeing of
Society



The Rights of the Child
NGO (ROC)



Together Scotland,
United Kingdom



Voces Ciudadanas
(ACEPT), Peru



WAO Afrique, Togo



War Child Holland,
Netherlands



Women's World Summit
Foundation (WWSF),
Switzerland



World Organisation
Against Torture/
SOS Torture (OMCT),
Switzerland



World Vision
International, USA

Observers

Interim Observer Status to be validated by the Child Rights Connect General Assembly in June 2022



The Global Partnership
to End Violence against
Children



The Inter-American
Children's Institute (IIN)



The Foundation for the
Student Rights

Executive Committee

From June 2021

Maria Herczog

Family Child Youth Association
(Eurochild), President of the Executive
Committee

Sigurd Johns

Save the Children International, Vice-
President of the Executive Committee

Alan Kikuchi-White

SOS Children's Villages International,
Treasurer of the Executive Committee

Catherine Mbengue

African Child Policy Forum, Secretary of
the Executive Committee

Maria Amihan Abueva

Child Rights Coalition Asia

Maria Belen Paz Aguilar

Learning for Wellbeing Foundation

Chris Derksen-Hiebert

World Vision International

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Corberó**

Programme
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Legal Officer



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Associate Legal
Officer



Fanny Chappuis

CRC Reporting
and Programme
Support



**Leire Ibáñez
Larrea**

Network
Assistant

Finances

Balance Sheet

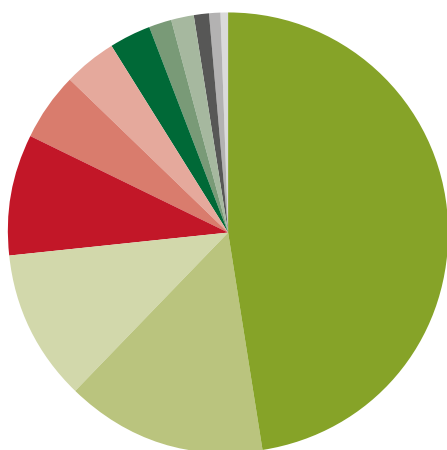
As at 31 December 2021 and 2020 (in Swiss Francs)

Assets	2021	2020
Cash and cash equivalents	43.856	204.564
Accrued income	20.354	91.987
Prepaid expenses	24.673	7.958
Sub-total current assets	88.883	304.509
Operational Contingency Fund	72.950	50.000
Cash deposits (visa card and office lease)	32.002	5.002
IT equipment and office furniture	7.496	4.864
Sub-total fixed assets	112.448	59.866
Total assets	201.331	364.375

Liabilities	2021	2020
Accounts payable	10.632	7.985
Accrued liabilities	48.036	88.445
Income received in advance	0	180.013
Sub-total current liabilities	58.667	276.444
Restricted funds on ongoing projects	7.365	22.121
Sub-total non-current liabilities	7.365	22.121
Restricted capital	37.130	37.130
Restricted capital - Operational Contingency Fund	72.950	50.000
Free capital	17.828	-21.320
Sub-total capital of the organisation	127.908	65.810
Total liabilities and capital	193.940	364.375

Income and operating expenses

Income	2021	2020
Membership fees	115.867	106.317
Grant/donations from members	94.839	93.929
Grant/donations from governments	659.216	577.894
Grant/donations from foundations	178.260	132.768
Grant/donations from other organisations	43.523	51.614
Other income	3.841	3.078
Total income	1.095.546	965.600



Breakdown of 2021 income

	2021	%
SIDA	526.705	48%
Oak Foundation	160.000	15%
Member fees	115.867	11%
Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs	100.000	9%
Plan International	54.288	5%
UN Environmental Programme	43.523	4%
German Federal Foreign Office	32.511	3%
Save the Children Sweden	19.785	1.8%
Neo Philanthropic Foundation	18.260	1.7%
SOS Children's Villages	10.766	1%
World Vision International	10.000	0.9%
Other income	3.841	0.4%

Operating expenses by cost centre

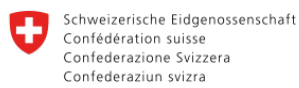
	2021	2020
Personnel costs	858.953	712.066
Salaries and social charges	844.722	694.129
Other staff expenses	14.231	17.937
Operating costs	172.259	147.300
Office costs	66.764	51.074
Professional services	101.634	92.861
Governance and network management	0	0
Bank fees	3.861	3.365
Activity costs	61.278	117.829
Consultants	60.304	101.425
Venue and catering	0	274
Travel	0	14.364
Miscellaneous	974	1.766
Total costs	1.092.490	977.195

Our donors and supporters

We would like to express our sincere gratitude to our donors, partners, and supporters. Your contributions enable us to support children's rights defenders, including children, around the globe to engage with each other and the UN human rights system, and to take important steps towards the universal realisation of children's rights.



Swedish International
Development Cooperation
Agency



Swiss Federal Department
of Foreign Affairs



United Nations Environment
Programme



Oak Foundation



Plan International Sweden



Save the Children Sweden



SOS Children's Villages
International



Foreign Office of the Federal
Republic of Germany



World Vision



NEO Philanthropy

Looking ahead

What's on in 2022?

Ensuring civil society and child participation in the development of the UN Guidance Note on child rights mainstreaming

We will support and inform the multiyear inter-agency process led by a core group of four UN entities – the OHCHR, UNICEF and the two Special Representatives to the Secretary-General with a mandate focused on child rights – to develop the UN Guidance Note on child rights mainstreaming by mobilizing, consulting with, and feeding back the views of children and civil society around the world. This will be key to ensuring that the UN-wide guidance on children's rights is grounded in the everyday realities of children and is as effective and impactful as possible.

Further implementing the Guide on the rights of Child Human Rights Defenders all levels

We will continue our efforts to advance the recognition, protection of the rights and empowerment of child human rights defenders, including through child participation at all levels. A continued emphasis will be placed on resourcing children with tools to act, primarily through expanding and further disseminating the new mini site on child human rights defenders. At the national level, we will bring our pilot project in Moldova to the next level, with a view to influence the ongoing development of a law on human rights defenders, towards inclusion of children's rights, by generating international support to the legislative process, further fostering collaboration between civil society organisations, continuously empowering children at the community and national level, and creating linkages with the UN human rights reporting mechanisms. Subject to partners' interest and capacity, we will also replicate elements of the Moldova pilot project in other countries. Linking local to global work, we will further advocate to influence the strengthening of international standards for child human rights defenders, particularly with the CRC Committee and Special Procedures.

Further enhancing child participation in the activities of the CRC Committee and other UN mechanisms

Using our updated guidelines, we will further empower children and children's rights defenders around the world to enhance their coordinated, long-term engagement with the CRC Committee with a focus on enhancing child-led participation in the activities of the CRC Committee, building links with the UPR (including through the publication, for members, of a coordination tool on engagement with the CRC Committee and UPR), and supporting those in countries where civil society participation has been weak. We will work at increasing safe, empowering, inclusive and sustained child participation at the 2022 annual full-day meeting on the rights of the child of the Human Rights Council. Using The UPR and Me Guide, and jointly with UPR Info, we will continue to support our network

members and other children's rights defenders to facilitate child participation through and within the UPR and increase child rights focused UPR submissions. To address the lack of UPR recommendations on child human rights defenders, we will develop a thematic brief for diplomats and engage them with our members and partners, such as UPR Info and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders. We will also foster child participation in the work of the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights through convening regional children's consultations to inform their new General Comment on sustainable development.

Further building synergies between the CRC Committee, the other Treaty Bodies, the Human Rights Council and other UN processes to strengthen accountability to children

A focus will be placed on improving the capacity of Network members and other civil society organisations to follow-up on relevant UN recommendations and resolutions at country level through the development and publication of dedicated tools (including jointly with Save the Children, as part of their "How to child rights" series), as well as to identify and harness synergies between various UN processes to advance accountability to children (including through capacity-building and technical assistance). We will also support various UN entities and mechanisms to apply good practices on child participation and safeguarding, including the Human Rights Council, OHCHR, UNEP, and the ILO. We will also promote transparency around the 2022 elections of CRC Committee members to ensure independent and competent child rights experts join the Committee.

Further promoting the ratification and use of OPIC to ensure children's access to justice

We will continue to promote increased awareness and understanding of the OPIC by States, children, Network members, other non-State actors and lawyers, including through the publication of resources for children (such as a template for child-friendly versions of OPIC Views) and for adults supporting children (such as a joint tool with Save the Children on how to follow-up to OPIC Views), continuously developing the OPIC mini-site, and institutionalizing the annual exchange meeting between States and the CRC Committee. An emphasis will be placed on increasing the capacity of children (both as individuals and networks) to advocate for OPIC ratification in Latin America and the Caribbean, as well as supporting the ongoing ratification campaigns of Network members and local partners, with a continued focus on Africa. To promote the strategic use of the instrument, we will further deliver capacity-building programmes for children's rights defenders on strategic litigation and wider universal human rights system and access to justice issues, including for Network members.



child rights connect

Child Rights Connect

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