

CHILD RIGHTS CONNECT ANNUAL REPORT 2022

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INTRODUCTION

Forewords from one of 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 our outgoing child advisor from Bolivia, Jorge, had to say about 2022 and his two-year involvement in the CAT:



Dear Friends of Child Rights Connect,

I am writing this letter to thank you for everything I was able to learn in these 2 years of being part of the Children's Advisory Team (CAT) and the great change that this experience represented in my life.

By joining the Child Rights Connect Children's Advisory Team, I was able to broaden my perspectives and vision of children's issues in the world and the importance of being agents of change as young people. This made me grow as a person, giving me a different approach aimed at not only making problems visible but also looking for solutions.

I want to thank all the members who are part of this multidisciplinary team, Alex Conte and all the authorities and directors, Emma and Or, Maria Belen Paz and the Act2gether team who always supported me in Bolivia, all the people who helped me with the translation of texts, letters, messages and speeches and all those who make this effort possible to make visible the problems and rights of children and young people in the world for their great dedication.

I feel happy and fortunate to have been able to contribute, even in a small part, to this fight that unites us all. My greatest interest was always in the right to education, since I am sure that it is the key weapon for us to change this world, and from my particular condition of life also include the issue of disability, [visual impairment] in my case, I thank you for considering adapting texts, describing images and always being willing to listen to my points of view and giving me the space to communicate the problems from my region and my country Bolivia and always be respectful of the time that we as children/youth have.

I know that there is a long road ahead and where you can always count on me, I want to tell you that I have already started university and one of the motivations that made me choose to study law was to be part of Child Rights Connect. I hope that in the future I can continue contributing to this common effort.

It saddens me to be leaving Child Rights Connect, but life is made of changes, hopefully for the better. I have grown, but I do not forget those children who need someone to raise their voices for and with them. Entering adulthood now at 18 years of age, I am aware that the generation that emerges from Child Rights Connect can sow that seed of change in the adult population.

Thank you for so much, thank you for everything and always!"

Jorge, 2021-2022 child advisor, Bolivia

Words from the Chair of the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child



As a Chair with extensive civil society background, collaboration and partnership with Child Rights Connect has been critical. It is essential and indispensable for the effective work of the Committee on the Rights of the Child to receive support from civil society organizations. However, too often, NGOs that are working for and with children at the national level don't have direct access to the Committee. Child Rights Connect plays a crucial role in "connecting" the Committee and NGOs working all over the world as well as NGOs on thematic issues such as climate change, violence against children, children and armed conflict and child labour. I would like to express my special appreciation for the extremely hard and dedicated work of Child Rights Connect. It is my privilege and pleasure to have worked closely with Child Rights Connect as the Chair over the past two years.

This is my belief that the partnership between the Committee and civil society organizations should be two ways, complementing each other's work, for the common objective – to realize children's rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Suggestions, proposals and even critical feedback from civil society organizations to the Committee are valuable for the effective performance of the Committee in reviewing States parties, addressing child rights issues and advocating child rights agenda vocally. In this regard, I would like to acknowledge the important role that Child Rights Connect has played as a real partner for the Committee.

Child participation is a special area where the Committee has continually benefited from the expert support of Child Rights Connect, such as for example towards the establishment of the child advisory team for the General Comment No. 26. It is remarkable that the Committee's first attempt to have child speakers in the public opening of the session was made possible by the participation of child advisory team of Child Rights Connect in September 2022.

I would like to highlight some joint achievements around making the Committee more active and vocal advocating child rights agenda in the broader UN system, through co-organizing side events at the High Level Political Forum on SDGs and the General Assembly, and engaging with the process for the Future of the Summit. The most remarkable collaboration was for the SG's guidance note on child rights mainstreaming, which was the result of the initiative of Child Rights Connect and the strong and broad support of civil society. The Committee actively engaged in the process for the guidance note by participating in the discussion on this issue in the General Assembly of Child Rights Connect in 2022 and providing inputs to the draft note, while Child Rights Connect has particularly contributed to raise awareness and participation of children and civil society in consultation.

I hope that the partnership and collaboration between the Committee and Child Rights Connect will be further strengthened to make real impact on the rights of children in the world.

Mikiko Otani, Chair of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2021-2023)

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 100 member and observer organisations, it spans all regions, reaching millions of children in more than 190 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 UNCRC 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 nearly 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 and other UN human rights mechanisms.
- We are the leading organisation bringing global attention to safe, empowering, inclusive and sustained child participation and the rights and empowerment of child human rights defenders (CHRDs).
- 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).



Further expanding and strengthening our Network

Our Network has reached the peak of 100 organisations!

Our members and observers are national, regional and international organisations, coalitions and networks 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 2022, our global engagement was enhanced with the admission to our network of **eleven new member organisations from four continents**: Action Le Vert in Democratic Republic of the Congo; Alana Institute in Brazil; Asylex in Switzerland; Changefactory in Norway; Disable Development & Educational Foundation in Bangladesh; Excellence Academy in India; Fondation Apprentis d'Auteuil International in Switzerland; Future Hopes Integrated Development Organization in Ethiopia; Gruppo di lavoro per la Convenzione sui diritti dell'Infanzia e dell'Adolescenza in Italy; the International Coalition for Children with Incarcerated Parents in Scotland; and the Martin James Foundation in the England. On top of their geographic expertise, these new members bring thematic expertise on innovative or

under-represented topics within the network such as children's rights and artificial intelligence, children's rights and assisted reproductive technologies, and children and livelihoods.

With a number twice as high as the number of members welcomed to the network last year and around 45 per cent of new members based in the Global South, we made solid progress in realizing our priority to diversify our membership with a focus on the under-represented regions of Africa, Asia and Latin America.

This year, for the first time, and in implementation of our pilot on strengthening membership adopted at the 2021 General Assembly, we also **officially welcomed into the network five organisations with an observer status, including two child/youth-led organisations**: the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children with a global reach; Inter-American Children's Institute (IIN-OEA) based in Uruguay but working across Latin America; The Foundation for the Student Rights, a youth-led organisation in Poland; Children 4 Peace (C4P), a child-led organisation working in Cameroon; and the European Network of Ombudspersons for Children (ENOC) in Europe.

The permanent Children's Advisory Team: core to our identity, activities, functioning and children's empowerment across the globe



The establishment of the Children's Advisory Team serves as a role model for other organisations. [...] Besides integrating across the network and informing the governance of [Child Rights Connect] as a global network, the child advisors play an important role in the CRC reporting processes and in connecting the fields of child rights at local, regional and global levels."

External evaluators of Child Rights Connect's work, 2022

Building on successful experience since 2020, our global Children's Advisory Team continued to operate throughout 2022 as a **permanent group within our organisation and central to advancing our efforts on children's empowerment globally**. In 2022, the Team was composed of 12 children, including seven girls, a gender-diverse child and two children with disabilities, aged between 13 to 18 years old, from different countries representing all continents of the world.

Throughout the year, with the guidance of former child advisors who acted as mentors, our child advisors shaped and undertook human rights actions, defining their own roadmap for action in response to the pressing issues identified by them and contributing to ours, in line with our **Strategy**. Through consulting with other children, making oral statements, submitting written inputs, and participating in events and meetings, they have elevated the voices of children, improved spaces of expression for children and shared their views on how to advance child rights, restlessly advocating for child rights mainstreaming at the UN and in their own countries. Doing so, they engaged with, and contributed to inform not only the work but also the working methods of, several UN bodies and representatives such as the CRC Committee, Human Rights Council, UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Special Representative of the Secretary-General on violence against children, Office of the Human Commission for Human Rights (OHCHR), UNICEF and United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP).



For example, we helped to set up a process for children to inform the UN Guidance Note on Child Rights Mainstreaming which has been very successful this year and has allowed the UN to listen directly from children on the issues affecting them and their calls for the Guidance Note."

Miriam, child advisor, Lebanon.

Their engagement has spanned a range of topics that are dear to them.



Our child advisors also contributed to resourcing other children with accessible information about their rights and how to claim them as well as opportunities to engage at the UN, through informing the development of new child-friendly resources, such as the child-friendly version of our 2021 paper on child rights mainstreaming.



With Child Rights Connect children's advisory team, we worked on drafting child friendly versions of reports such as the report on CHRD's rights that children have told the Team has been very helpful in understanding their rights as defenders."

Mariam, former child advisor, Egypt.

2022 was a key year to further institutionalise child participation in our organisation. **For the first time, several child advisors took part in our General Assembly in 2022.** By connecting online, they actively engaged with CRC Committee members, OHCHR representatives and our network organisations on what child rights mainstreaming means for them, why it is critical to realizing their rights, and what the UN and civil society can do, particularly to improve child participation in their work.

Further, after a two-year dedicated pilot, our Executive Committee took the **unanimous decision to make child participation in our Executive Committee a permanent feature of our Network's governance.** We are just a handful of global civil society organisations with such model.



We have seen that the participation of children in the Executive Committee has been an empowering experience for the child advisors. We have learned a lot from them and we will continue to adapt to enhance children's participation. Critically, their participation facilitates an inter-generational dialogue that is integral to the overall way in which we approach our programmatic work as well as our governance", stated **Maria Herczog**, our President. Reflecting on the two Executive Committee meetings she attended on behalf of the CAT in 2022, **Miriam**, our child advisor from Lebanon said: *"I felt included! I managed to grasp the overall concepts [discussed]. I can adopt many ideas regarding fundraising on smaller scales and this is very rewarding."*

MEET OUR 2022 CHILDREN'S ADVISORY TEAM

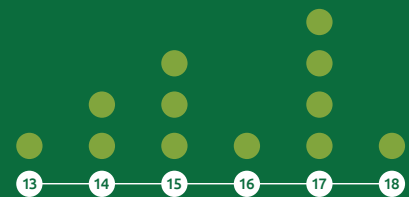
12 Children empowered as human rights defenders to shape and take forward activities on child rights, in line with our 2020-2024 strategic plan.

7 GIRLS | **4 BOYS** | **1 GENDER DIVERSE CHILD**

incl. 2 children with disabilities

each supported by a member/partner of Child Rights Connect

Age



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

With members from Bolivia, Cameroon, Canada, Croatia, Indonesia, Iraq, Kenya, Lebanon, Thailand, Trinidad and Tobago, Samoa and Scotland.



What child advisors say about their participation in the CAT



I have loved the child rights-based approach underpinning the CAT with and for children [...] I have also loved meetings we organized to engage with civil society and other relevant actors, foster collaboration, empower children's rights defenders, including children, to meaningfully participate in global advocacy for children's rights at different levels. The CAT provided me and my organization a unique platform to ensure local to global advocacy [...]. The CAT empowered me to mainstream child rights within our own programme and activities and to advocate for child rights mainstreaming with government".

Gloria, 15 years old, Cameroon



Child Rights Connect has helped me to become part of their Children's Advisory Team and to empower me to think of new ideas for our activities and to be part of many activities at the UN. For example, I recently took part in an event with Plan International for the International Day of the Girl which would not have been possible without them. Being part of the CAT, we have also shared our recommendations directly with the Committee on the Rights of the Child [...]. The Committee is now considering some of our suggestions like putting in place a Children's Advisory Team in the Committee. "

Miriam, 17 years old, Lebanon

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, including their rights as child human rights defenders. This constitutes 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.

How change happens: Our Theory of Change



Countering the backlash against children's rights and the child rights movement

A reflection from our Executive Director

2022 was yet another year with substantial challenges attributable to the **backlash against children's rights**. We have witnessed child human rights defenders (CHRDs) becoming even more active at a global level, facing very negative consequences, such as one of our child advisors who is subject to criminal prosecution in their country simply for demanding democracy on social media. Adult children's rights defenders have not been spared by attacks undermining their freedom, safety and action, as experienced for instance by our member, Defence for Children International - Palestine, with whom **our Network stood in solidarity**. The war in Ukraine has exacerbated the already polarised geopolitical context, including at the Human Rights Council where child rights seem to have become a battleground for the Russian Federation and its allies to be even more aggressive in putting forward conservative amendments to human rights resolutions.

This year's resolution on the rights of the child focused on the sensitive issue of **family reunification** in the context of migration and children allegedly associated with armed forces and armed groups, including terrorist groups. The negotiations evidenced the large number of States who still don't view children as rights-holders independent from their parents or caregivers. States pushed back on progressive language on child participation, diverse forms of families, gender, gender-based violence and sexual and reproductive health rights. The most contentious issue centred around the prohibition of immigration detention. Thanks to coordinated advocacy with our members and UN agencies, the language in the resolution did not ultimately undermine international standards set by the CRC Committee and instead expressed political consensus around the need for States to put in place non-custodial alternatives to detention for children. But this experience highlighted that the level of advocacy needed to counter push backs against child rights standards is increasing, not only to support State champions of child rights but, in this case, also to advocate for a number of them – who were otherwise silent on the issue – to speak out and defend a rights-compliant approach.

The year reaffirmed that resources to support our work – including to counter the backlash against child rights rather than concentrating efforts to make positive progress – are becoming more and more scarce and further diverted towards humanitarian assistance. 2022 was a challenging year for Child Rights Connect as we had to reduce our staff capacity and at the same time deal with increasing demands and expectations.

Amid this generally grim picture, we nevertheless saw some key positive developments, such as:

- UNICEF and the CRC Committee have become increasingly coordinated and vocal on the push back against children's rights, as testified by their joint statements on the occasion of **2022 Human Rights Day** and on **CHRDs**.
- The CRC Committee has progressively resumed its review of States Parties that had been disrupted by the COVID19 pandemic. Children's rights defenders, including children, have started to come back to Geneva in record numbers to attend CRC pre-sessions in-person, therefore benefitting from closer interaction with CRC members and our staff.
- We established our first formal partnership with a State, namely Iceland, to support the implementation of the CRC Committee's Concluding Observations to Iceland through child participation and synergies between national and international initiatives.
- In the context of a paralyzed UN Security Council and a generally weak UN General Assembly, the Human Rights Council has proved its added value and effectiveness through its establishment of an Independent International Commission of Inquiry on Ukraine, which was strongly **called for by our Network**.
- The UN General Assembly has recognized the human right to live in a clean, healthy and sustainable environment through an historic resolution that built on the 2021 Human Rights Council **resolution 48/13**, which we had influenced along with our members and partners.

Continued next page

- The Special Representative of the Secretary General on Violence Against Children has set new standards on child participation by issuing the first ever child-friendly version of the mandate's annual reports, which she presented to the Human Rights Council through dialogue with children, **including our child advisor Jorge**.

- The Council of Europe has launched its 2022-2027 strategy for the rights of the child which has provided us with the opportunity to start conducting the first ever study on the situation of CHRDs in the Council of Europe's Member States.

And there are many more to read in our report, which I hope you will enjoy.



Alex Conte
Executive Director

Three key achievements in 2022

1

We unlocked the potential of the first national child rights coalition in Morocco to advocate for children's rights

Despite significant progress made by Morocco in realizing children's rights, these advances greatly vary and many children continue to face violations of their human rights, such as children living in poverty, children with disabilities, girls, children on the move, among others. UNICEF's **Situation Analysis from 2019** documented this very well, but it also pointed out that, despite a high number of child rights actors from civil society and at institutional levels, the lack of coordination between them is a major obstacle to implementing the UNCRC in Morocco. Until recently, there was no national civil society coalition bringing together voices, experiences, and resources to push for the realisation of child rights in Morocco. Yet, as shown by our **2019 Study on the Global Status of Engagement in Reporting to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child** (the Study), national child rights coalitions are key to influencing the work of the CRC Committee and advocating for change at the national level.

In 2017, 18 national and international child rights NGOs came together to establish the first ever child rights coalition in Morocco: **Plateforme pour la Convention des Droits de l'Enfant** (PCDE). Since 2019, we have embarked on **a journey to support the development of the coalition with a view to strengthen its advocacy at the national, regional and international levels**. The coalition was officially welcomed to the **Network** in 2020, providing a lasting platform for increased collaboration and

opportunities for learning. As a result, the PCDE submitted its first coordinated submission to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in March 2022. Following that, a two-day in-person capacity-building workshop was delivered by the Secretariat in Rabat for 19 PCDE member organisations (represented by 21 practitioners), focused on UPR advocacy in preparation for the participation of the coalition in the UPR pre-session in August 2022. The workshop worked on reporting to the CRC Committee under the Simplified Reporting Procedure, rolling out child participation in the coalition's engagement with UN mechanisms, and advancing the rights of CHRDs through UN advocacy. The workshop also facilitated a discussion between coalition members on the diversity of the PCDE, institutional and operational challenges, and how to strengthen the platform. PCDE members participated in the UPR pre-session in August 2022 and, as a follow-up to the training, organised a meeting on UPR recommendations with Embassies in Rabat in October 2022, with positive traction on the recommendations from the EU Delegation.

The 2019 Study had identified the risk of lack of stability and sustainability of national coalitions as a key barrier to lasting civil society dialogue with the CRC Committee and sustained international pressure on States, highlighting specifically the challenge of *"finding ways to maintain dynamic networks over an extended period of time"*. With our support, and though this is still an early phase in the development of the Morocco coalition, with weaknesses to address, the PCDE is developing as a credible, effective coalition with potential for sustainability and impact. The growth in membership, from 18 organisations in 2017 to 29

organisations today, is an indicator of credibility and improved convening power. The fact that the PCDE collaborated with a group of local NGOs supporting children in street situations in Tanger (the “Comité Rassif”, which counts 11 member organisations) as part of its first UPR submission also testifies to its capacity to coordinate beyond the platform and develop effective partnership with other civil society actors. Importantly, our support to the PCDE has poised it to take effective steps towards organisational strengthening, particularly around safe child participation (through initiating the development of a platform-wide Child Safeguarding Policy and Procedure) and UN advocacy (through initiating the development of a coordinated advocacy strategy).



The training was useful on several counts to strengthen the capacities of the PCDE. In particular, the formulation of an advocacy strategy for the next phases of the UPR advocacy process, as well as the preparation for our report to the CRC Committee. Reflections on child participation allowed PCDE members to identify possible actions for the coalition to achieve child participation. The discussions held on the weaknesses of the PCDE allowed a more constructive discussion during the General Assembly and the taking of decisions and measures aimed at improving the governance of the coalition.”

A female representative of a member organisation of the coalition.

2

We contributed to advancing international standards on girls’ political participation

Children’s political rights have historically been overlooked and continue to be challenged by many States, some on the ground of traditional values and parental rights, others simply because they do not see how children can participate in political life if they cannot vote. Yet, more and more children around the world are speaking up on human rights issues and are at the forefront of peaceful protests calling for action against climate change, social inequalities, gender-based violence, and discriminatory laws, as well as other pressing issues. Among these children, we have seen many girl human rights defenders facing additional inter-sectional obstacles and risks, as their activism challenges widespread adultism as well as accepted discriminatory socio-cultural constructs about the status of women in society.

Amidst the global pushback against girls’ rights, the UN Working Group on Discrimination Against Women and Girls decided to focus their **2022 annual report on young women and girls’ activism**.

This report integrates all the key points raised in our submission, specifically that:

1. Girls have the right to take part in public affairs and to enjoy that right;
2. Girl activists who peacefully defend human rights are entitled to the legal protections afforded by the **UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders**;
3. Families and communities bear responsibility for empowering girls and ensuring an enabling environment for their activism; and
4. States should increase spaces for girls’ participation at all levels, including at regional and international levels.

The report was also informed by first-hand information provided by girl activists from different regions.

With our members, we created the opportunity for the Working Group to directly consult with girls, and provided technical assistance on how to implement child-friendly and safeguarding procedures.

The Working Group decided to focus on girls’ activism to link its work to the **resolution of the Human Rights Council on discrimination against women and girls** that would later in 2022 also focus on the topic. Joining forces with members and other civil society organisations, we coordinated closely with Mexico (the State leading on the resolution) and other friendly States to suggest progressive language on the draft resolution that built on the findings and recommendations of the Working Group’s report.



This was recognized as instrumental to clearly explain throughout the process key concepts and topics for the resolution and the topic as a whole, and in overcoming conservative views on girls’ rights expressed through nine hostile amendment proposals to the text on issues relating to gender, girl human rights defenders and girl-led organisations, sexual and reproductive rights, safe abortion, and the role of parents.”

Permanent Mission of Mexico to the UN

These proposals were ultimately all rejected, leading to a progressive resolution that reaffirms girls' right to political participation and calls on States to take very concrete action to make that real for all girls. The resolution was adopted by consensus (without a vote), giving hope for political commitment to implementation on the ground as well as for additional standards to be developed by other UN mechanisms for all children.



While there still is a long way to go before all girls enjoy their civil and political rights without restrictions, the international community sends a strong signal of resilience to widespread attacks against girls' rights through this resolution".

Agnès Gràcia Corberó, our Senior Global Advocacy Officer

3

We contributed to advancing international standards on child human rights defenders



Children are already human rights defenders, and they have the same rights as adult human rights defenders (...) we need to highlight their important role, and the obligation of States to respect and protect their rights".

Chairperson of the CRC Committee during one of our events in 2022

The world is indeed experiencing an unprecedented mobilization of children acting to address the most pressing challenges faced by humanity. With her girl-led organisation, for example, our child advisor in Cameroon called on the Government to establish a Commission of Inquiry to shed light on accountability for several recent massacres. The resulting public findings of the Commission of Inquiry have confirmed the responsibility of certain elements of the army for human rights violations, as shown by the investigation conducted by our child advisor's organisation. In Lebanon, our child advisor launched her own educational programme on child civic engagement. Using a booklet that she developed, she has been empowering children in schools across the country to sensitize their peers about the importance of civic engagement.

In contrast, international standards are not yet catching up – let alone keeping pace – with the rate at which children are taking up public spaces to promote and defend the human rights of children, as well as those of everyone. The UN human rights mechanisms need to do much more to address the specific challenges that CHRDs experience, especially when these lead to violations of their human rights. In 2022 **we stepped up our advocacy with the CRC Committee and the Universal Periodic Review (UPR), prompting new recommendations that explicitly mention "child human rights defenders"**. In its **Concluding Observations on Vietnam**, the CRC Committee adopted landmark recommendations to ensure that CHRDs can exercise their rights to freedom of expression, association and peaceful assembly. The Committee made an explicit link between CHRDs and children's civil and political rights, an often-overlooked area. This is a key milestone as all previous recommendations on CHRDs have related to general cooperation between the State and civil society. This will contribute to raising global awareness and acceptance about children's right to participate in the conduct of public affairs. At the national level, it will ensure that children's political participation is on the agenda, as the Government of Vietnam will be required to report on the implementation of the recommendation in its next report to the Committee.

More recommendations of this kind will follow.

We now systematically integrate technical advice on how to report on CHRDs' rights whenever it engages in capacity-building activities on CRC monitoring and reporting

for civil society, independent children's institutions and national human rights institutions. In 2022 we engaged in Asia-Pacific, Latin America, Colombia, Moldova, Morocco, and West Africa. In Moldova, the Secretariat (with network member CRIC Moldova) organised a workshop for civil society on how to report to the CRC Committee under the Simplified Reporting Procedure, including on how to include the rights of CHRDs within that framework. In Asia-Pacific, the Office of UNICEF for Eastern Asia and the Pacific and network member CRC Asia invited the Secretariat and CRIC Moldova to deliver a session on the rights of CHRDs, in the context of a regional workshop on Child Participation in the Digital World, for civil society organizations and National Human Rights Institutions. In Latin America and West Africa, the team joined Save the Children's capacity building efforts to empower civil society on how to include CHRDs' rights into monitoring and reporting on civic space for children's rights defenders.

We also activated the UPR through a public policy brief for States and a public webinar co-organised with UPR Info and co-sponsored by the CRC Committee and the Permanent Missions of Ireland and Mexico. This led to the first ever UPR recommendations explicitly mentioning CHRDs being made by Ireland (to Bahrein) and Luxembourg (to South Africa) in November 2022. Through the webinar, we coordinated dialogue between States, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, the CRC Committee, CHRDs from Moldova and Amnesty International Thailand, which proved instrumental to convince States to act and set this important precedent.



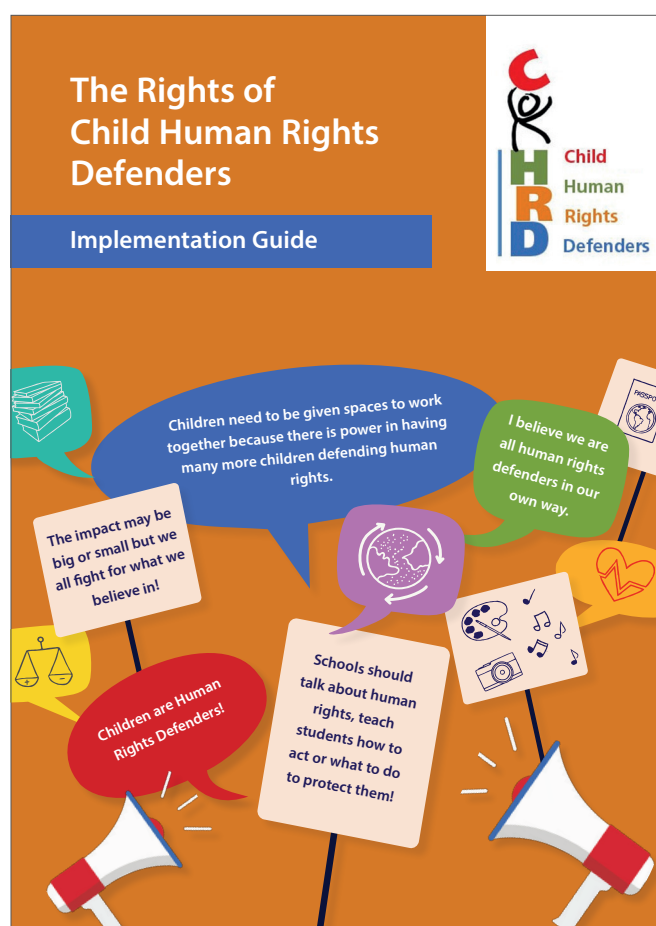
The more stakeholders that are aware, and the more agencies that are aware of the applicable human rights framework, as well as the legal and practical challenges faced by children when taking on human rights advocacy, the more attraction and acceptance there will eventually be, and this will grow."

Mary Lawlor, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders



The recognition of individuals as child human rights defenders is essential to ensure that they are afforded the legal protections."

Eamonn Mac Aodha, Chargé d'Affaires of the Permanent Mission of Ireland to the United Nations Office in Geneva



Additional programme highlights

A YEAR IN REVIEW 2022



1. Advancing the rights of child human rights defenders in Moldova and Bulgaria

In 2022, our work in **Moldova** in collaboration with our member Child Rights Information Center Moldova (CRIC) continued and further developed in an exciting way. In May 2022, **we facilitated the first ever hearing of the current Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders, Mary Lawlor, with children.** The meeting was convened at the request of the Special Rapporteur who had read the submission that CHRDs and civil society organisations from Moldova had made to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) thanks to our support. This is the first ever – and only so far – UPR report fully and explicitly focusing on the rights of CHRDs. A **meeting between CHRDs from Moldova** and the Special Rapporteur took place online and had a positive impact both on the Special Rapporteur and children.



I was truly inspired by the meeting and will take into account the participants' inputs and recommendations in my subsequent work on protecting and supporting CHRDs in Moldova and worldwide."

Mary Lawlor, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders

Children reported feeling empowered by the discussion with the Special Rapporteur and her team. They were able to openly share their experiences and challenges as CHRDs. They felt motivated by the comments that valued their efforts and the way that the Special Rapporteur publicly talked about the meeting, to the point that they decided to continue to engage with the Special Rapporteur by submitting inputs to her 2023 report focusing on positive change achieved by human rights defenders. One of the things that children discussed with the Special Rapporteur was the development of a national legislation on human rights defenders in Moldova. Thanks to our joint project with CRIC, children are being empowered to engage in this process, for the first time ever. In 2022, we facilitated informal discussions between CHRDs and the Children's Ombudsperson, a key actor to influence given that this institution is an integral part of the People's Advocate Ombudsman who put forward the proposal for a new law on human rights defenders. We also raised attention and support for such process at international level, as well as in other regions, for example by involving CRIC in the regional workshop for National Human Rights Institutions and civil society on "*Child Participation in the Digital World*" organized by UNICEF Office for East Asia and Pacific

and our network member CRC Asia. In November, thanks to new funding from the Ville de Genève and ongoing support from the Swedish International Development and Cooperation Agency (Sida), we have stepped up our collaboration with CRIC through a two-year project which will allow us to ensure that children have the necessary space and means to make the new law inclusive of child rights, as a model for other countries to adopt.

Building on the Moldova pilot project and thanks to the financial support from Tanya's Dream Fund, we have launched a similar one-year pilot project in **Bulgaria** with two national partners, the National Network for Children and the New Bulgarian University – Know How Centre for Alternative Care for Children. The goal of the project is to **empower CHRDs, particularly those who have or are likely to experience the care system, to shape and take forward human rights activities**, including through empowering adults in their supportive role. In November, we conducted two initial workshops in Sofia, respectively with children (including children living in residential care and from Roma origin) and with civil society organisations, to familiarize them with the concept of CHRDs and build their interest in the project. Children were offered a safe space and the tools to realise that what they do in their communities makes them human rights defenders and that this means entitlement to certain rights that they weren't familiar with, such as for example civil and political rights. They were then able to discuss the challenges they face in their human rights action, the unreadiness of many adults (parents, teachers) to support them, and the skeptical attitudes of their classmates.



Moldova – Fact sheet



Bulgaria – Fact sheet

2. Catalyzing the influence of civil society and children on UN policies and decision-making where children's rights are forgotten

As **acknowledged in 2021 by Volker Türk**, the now High Commissioner for Human Rights in his former role as Assistant Secretary General for strategic coordination, *"a holistic child rights perspective must be reinforced across the UN system at a global, regional and local level"*. The fact that the UN system is not doing enough to systematically put children's rights at the core of all its actions has real consequences for real children. States are not receiving the necessary technical assistance or feel enough pressure to implement the UNCRC fully, in all sectors, without leaving some children or some children's rights behind.

Children, especially the most marginalized, largely remain unaware of their rights and the UN, and they are among the most systematically excluded from relevant UN discussions and processes. This was a recurring message from the 450 and more children who engaged in the global consultation around the upcoming **Guidance Note of the UN Secretary General (SG) on Child Rights Mainstreaming**. Triggered by **our position paper on child rights mainstreaming** in response to the SG's 2021 report *"Our Common Agenda"*, the development of the Guidance Note started in early 2022 under the lead of an inter-agency core-group composed of OHCHR, UNICEF, and the Special Representatives of the SG on Violence Against Children and on Children in Armed Conflict.

With a view to **ensuring that the Guidance Note is grounded in the challenges faced by children's rights defenders, including children**, we organised a first exchange between the core-group and our Network during our General Assembly in June 2022. In partnership with our members and partners, we later convened **nine online regional consultations in multiple languages** in Africa, Asia, Pacific, Europe, and child specific consultations in Africa, Asia, Latin America, Middle East and North Africa, North America and the Caribbean. We also widely disseminated the online survey for civil society and developed a child-friendly version in close collaboration with our **Children's Advisory Team**. Overall, more than 450 children aged between 7-17 years old, and 300 civil society actors seized this historic opportunity to inform the Guidance Note. By engaging in the consultations and accessing child-friendly materials (including the child-friendly version of our **position paper** developed with our Children's Advisory Team), children were empowered to know more about their rights, to learn about the

UN and share their views and ideas on what the UN should do better. The Guidance Note will be finalised and published in 2023.

While working on the Guidance Note process, we had the opportunity to **pilot a child rights mainstreaming project in partnership with the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)**. We trained UNEP staff to engage child environmental human rights defenders in their programmatic activities in an empowering, inclusive, safe and sustained manner. Through a two-day capacity building programme in May 2022, including interaction with four of our child advisors, UNEP staff from various offices around the world were able to identify pragmatic measures to integrate a child rights approach, including child participation, into different areas of work, ranging from policy and advocacy, technical assistance to States, capacity building and participation of civil society in multilateral spaces. The workshop also resourced UNEP staff with child safeguarding tools and practical tips on how to effectively implement the child-friendly policy and procedures on human rights defenders that we developed in 2021 for them. Not only has this contributed to raising UNEP's staff awareness on children's rights, but it also helped them gain practical knowledge on how to make their work more effective and impactful for child environmental human rights defenders.

While mobilizing our Network to influence the content of the Guidance Note, we have advanced child rights mainstreaming through other entry points. **We convinced the Human Rights Council to ask the High Commissioner for Human Rights, through the 2022 resolution on the rights of the child, to present a report on child rights mainstreaming in 2024**. Thanks to the leadership of the European Union and Uruguay, the resolution requests the OHCHR to prepare a comprehensive report, in an accessible format, with specific recommendations on how to strengthen a child rights-based approach in the work of the United Nations. This request is a long-awaited follow-up to the **Council's high-level panel on child rights mainstreaming** held in 2020. This is one of the key advocacy opportunities highlighted the three-year **"Network Advocacy Plan: Advancing Child Rights Mainstreaming across the UN system 2022-2025"** that we developed in 2022 with inputs from members, child advisors, and close UN partners.

The plan is a living tool providing a long-term common vision along the lines of the SG's Our Common Agenda and empowering our Network to act in a coordinated way at the national, regional and international level. **It has enabled us to activate joint advocacy with members around the Summit**

of the Future that the Secretary-General will hold in 2024 to concretize key proposals included in *Our Common Agenda* report. The outcome of the Summit – the Pact of the future – will surely include recommendations and decisions on a variety of issues that will impact children’s rights directly or indirectly, such as future generations, youth engagement, public information, the digital space, economic growth, etc.

However, children’s rights and children have been completely absent from discussions around the Summit or limited to those focusing on future generations. Together with our Children’s Advisory Team, we started to advocate for the inclusion of children in the Summit in March 2022, when we supported our former child advisor from Bangladesh to participate in the **first consultation of the UN General Assembly (UNGA)** on the implementation of *Our Common Agenda*. We then joined **an open letter to Antonio Guterres** co-drafted by CHRDs from the #CovidUnder19 initiative and endorsed by fourteen other civil society organisations.

To influence the UN General Assembly resolution on the Summit of the Future, we joined forces with our members to engage with the General Assembly President-elect, the different co-facilitators and other friendly States. Building on our 2021 position

paper, we made a **submission** to the High-level Advisory Board established by the Secretary-General in preparation for the Summit of the Future. We also joined the main CSOs coalition coordinating advocacy around the Summit – the Coalition for the UN We Need – bringing a child rights perspective into discussions largely focusing on youth and adults. All this happened in close coordination with the CRC Committee and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children and has contributed to increasing attention to children’s rights among States, UN and civil society actors.



Investing in children is needed more than ever. Ensuring integration and mainstreaming of children’s rights across the work of the entire United Nations system and beyond, including in the relevant world summits and international conferences, is key to guaranteeing children’s protection, wellbeing, and empowerment. Advocacy by civil society, including children, is essential but it requires coordination across-sectors in order to be effective, as testified by the work of Child Rights Connect”

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



3. Advancing space for children's voices to shape global discussions and decisions on the environmental crisis

There are no longer doubts that the environmental crisis is a child rights crisis. What is still widely doubted is the importance of listening to children and acting on their recommendations on how to urgently respond to the triple planetary crisis. In 2022, we stepped up our efforts to empower child environmental human rights defenders and elevate their advocacy through the UN system. Building on the work started in 2021 to support the CRC Committee in developing its General Comment No 26 on *"Children's rights and the environment, with a special focus on climate change"*, we concentrated our efforts on meeting children's key demand of being associated to the development of this new guidance.



You need children's participation to exactly tell you how we feel and what we need from you. This includes us as child advisors and all the thousands of children taking part in the consultations all over the world. Only this will give you a General Comment that stands so true to us children",

Maya-Natuk, from Greenland, when addressing the CRC Committee at their 92nd session in January 2023.

Through partnership with and targeted technical assistance to our member Terre des Hommes Germany, **we contributed to the setting up of the first ever children's advisory team that the CRC Committee is partnering with for the development of a General Comment.** The team is a milestone of a broader **child participation process** that allowed **7,416 children** from around the world to engage in consultations. This is a record number for child participation at the UN level and it is certainly a result to which the active engagement of our Network and partners has contributed. The CRC Committee will launch its General Comment in 2023.

We also actively advocated for child rights and children to be included into the COP27. While many civil society organisations decided to boycott the COP27 due to the dire human rights situation in Egypt (the country holding COP27 Presidency), we decided to work with Egypt anyhow as we saw an unprecedented opening for children and the potential to set an important precedent for future UN Climate Change Conferences. While encouraging our members to join the international campaign to free human rights defenders in Egypt, **we made a strategic use of our neutral role as a global network to create a space for children's rights at COP27 and ensure that children are seen as partners in the global climate change agenda.**

In September 2022, in the margins of the 51st session of the Human Rights Council, we co-organised with our Working Group on children's rights and the environment and the Permanent Mission of Egypt to the UN in Geneva an **event around "The Voices of Children for COP27 and beyond"**. The event, which gathered more than 100 persons including government representatives, civil society, child rights experts, and children, was conceived as a bridge between the Human Rights Council and the COP27. The panel was composed of three child environmental human rights defenders, respectively from Brazil, Egypt and Pakistan, who shared poignant evidence of how the climate crisis threatens the fulfillment of their rights. The CRC Committee echoed and further stressed the children's strong messages and called on States to take urgent action, including Egypt to improve the situation of human rights defenders. Building on this positive collaboration, we decided to support Egypt, as well as YOUNGO, UNICEF and Save the Children, in organising a session on *"Children and adolescents-led action on climate change"* in the framework of the COP27's Youth and Future Generations Day on 10 November. Children actively took part in the intergenerational dialogue as panelists and participants, and a young activist moderated the discussions. Once again, **the CRC Committee leveraged children's messages and the event enabled them to share UN-backed up recommendations to COP27 decision-makers, setting an important precedent for future COP meetings.**

4. Generating increased awareness and buy-in around the ratification and use of the OPIC

Eight years have passed since the entry into force of the [Optional Protocol on an Individual Communications procedure](#) (OPIC), an international human rights treaty that allows the CRC Committee to address child rights violations that cannot be dealt with by the national system. Because many countries in the world do not have child-friendly justice systems and mechanisms, in the absence of OPIC ratification, child victims of human rights violations are left with no or limited access to effective remedies and reparation, which fuels impunity, social injustice, and discrimination, a fertile ground for further human rights violations. This is also the case in countries where the OPIC has been ratified, as this instrument is still poorly understood and used. While child rights violations have been on the rise globally, the number of State Parties to the OPIC remains low. The ratification pace slowed with the COVID-19 pandemic and is yet to get back on track (between 2022 and early 2023 two States ratified the instrument – Lithuania and New Zealand – and one State signed it, Kazakhstan, as a first step in the ratification process). States' reluctance to ratify the OPIC is mostly grounded in political misconceptions, lack of understanding of OPIC as a tool that can help strengthen national mechanisms, perceived legal and practical barriers to ratification, lack of prioritization of child rights on the political agenda, and poor levels of funding for this issue (as demonstrated in our 2020 [OPIC Ratification Toolkit](#)).

To address this, in 2022 we convened the **third annual exchange meeting on the OPIC between States and the CRC Committee**, in partnership with the Committee, OHCHR and the Permanent Missions of the Federal Republic of Germany and the Republic of Slovenia, as co-chairs of the Group of Friends on the Rights of the Child. This gave renewed impetus to OPIC-related and access to justice discussions at the international level. The meeting gathered more than 60 participants, representing more than 35 countries amongst which around 55 per cent had only signed the OPIC or taken no steps towards ratification. **This platform served to provide evidence-based arguments to convince States to ratify the OPIC.** Belgium shared its positive experience in implementing the Views of the CRC Committee to achieve positive changes in the country, both in terms of better protecting children's rights and improving the justice system. It was also the **opportunity for States to encourage more strategic and systematic use of the UPR to advance OPIC ratification.** As a sign of continued peer pressure

to ratify the instrument, 28 States made a specific recommendation on OPIC ratification to 12 other States as part of the UPR process in 2022 (with a total of 49 recommendations).

We also **supported UNICEF's initiatives, as for the first time ever UNICEF organized two events fully focusing on OPIC, one in New York and one in Asia.** In September, we participated remotely in the event *"Strengthening the promotion and protection of children's rights through access to justice: Using the OPIC"*, co-organised by UNICEF and the Permanent Missions of the Czech Republic and Slovakia in the margins of the Second Regular Session of the UNICEF Executive Board. Attended by representatives of more than 20 States, the event counted on the participation of UNICEF Executive Director, our Executive Director and one of our child advisors, Miriam from Lebanon, as panelists. Miriam called on the UN, State authorities and civil society to invest in *"creating child friendly material that can educate children [about the OPIC]"*, building stronger *"cooperation with national organizations can help spread awareness and educate children on the OPIC especially to children with limited virtual access"*, and promote the *"legal empowerment of children"*, including through *"building a global legal network at the country and regional level, where children can report any challenges they are facing within their country in this regard"*.

In Asia, we co-organised a roundtable discussion on child rights complaint procedures and effective remedies in partnership with UNICEF Office for East Asia and Pacific and our member CRC Asia. The roundtable gathered representatives of States, National Human Rights Institutions, civil society organizations, and the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commissions on Human Rights and on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children. It aimed to strengthen stakeholders' knowledge of effective national, regional, and international remedies for child rights violations with a focus on the OPIC.

In addition to working on ratification, we continued to **empower children on the OPIC.** In March 2022 we delivered a two-day multilingual training for the children's groups of our Network observer the Inter-American Children's Institute. The workshop gathered around 20 children (aged between 10-17 years old) and young people (between 18-25 years old), half of whom were girls, from 10 countries in the Americas and the Caribbean. The training was delivered through an interactive methodology, using group discussions, case studies and materials adapted to children. It sought to empower children so they can themselves train their peers within and

beyond their networks, as a multiplier effect. At the end of the training, all children reported that the workshop helped them to learn and understand better the universal human rights system, the OPIC, and why it is important to promote OPIC ratification. Empowering children also entails making the OPIC procedures more child-friendly. Working in partnership with the University of Leiden, and in consultation with our Children's Advisory Team and some child petitioners of the *Sacchi et al. V. Argentina et al.* case (the **so-called climate change case**), in 2022 we developed for the CRC Committee a *Guide on how to draft child-friendly decisions under the OPIC*, along with additional tools, including template decisions for both admissible and inadmissible cases, and a concrete example of an OPIC child-friendly decision. Warmly welcomed by the CRC Committee, these tools will guide how they communicate their future decisions to children, as they develop this practice.



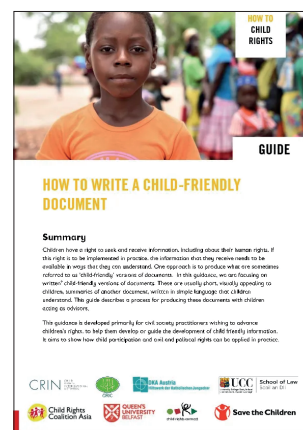
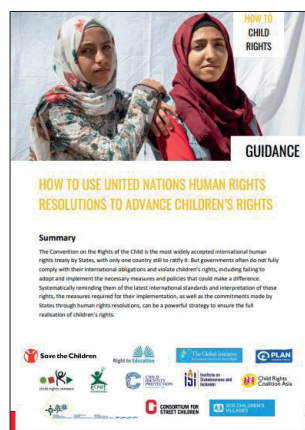
I want to assure you as the current chair of the CRC Working Group on OPIC, that there will be follow up work on this so that the crucial foundation you have laid here is built upon”.

CRC member **Ann Skelton**, former Chair of the Committee's Working Group on OPIC.

We also continued to **empower adult defenders and strengthen OPIC-related capacity within our Network**. Between December 2021 and February 2022, we delivered a tailored capacity building programme for our member SOS Children's Villages. The two-day workshop, which gathered 35 practitioners representing all the SOS Children's Villages offices in Latin America, aimed to equip them with a better understanding, not only of what the OPIC is, but also and in particular of why and how OPIC is relevant to their on-going work. Addressing the misconception that OPIC is “legal work for lawyers only”, we unpacked what advocacy practitioners and social workers can do about it, by integrating it into their own daily work and by strengthening coordination with Child Rights Connect's Secretariat.

5. Empowering practitioners through the HOW TO CHILD RIGHTS series in partnership with Save the children

Child Rights Connect is a key partner to the **HOW TO CHILD RIGHTS series**, a collaborative and participatory project initiated by Save the children and developed in partnership with a broad range of civil society partners, including many of our members and partners. We have been actively involved in its inception in 2021, as part of the reference team, and have played a key role in its launch in 2022. The HOW TO CHILD RIGHTS is a series of practical, high quality, tried and tested tools, guidance and case studies aimed at strengthening the application of a child rights approach into programming and advocacy through the collaboration, sharing and peer-learning between civil society organisations and networks. Out of the 10 new tools developed so far, we took the lead or an active role in seven of them, including new guidance on how to follow up to UN recommendations and resolutions, how to draft child-friendly documents and case studies on CRC reporting. We also included many of our existing tools into this series to go through a quality check and expand outreach and opportunities for feedback. The tools are published on Save the children's Resource Center as well as on Child Rights Connect's **website**.



2022

IN NUMBERS

Publications and communications

6 new multilingual resources developed to help children engage with the UN (3 tools) and adults to engage or support children to engage with the UN (3 tools)

>70K users of our websites in total (17% increase compared to 2021)

12% increase in the number of Twitter followers, and 22% increase in the number of followers of our Facebook page compared to 2021

Network engagement

100 members and observers

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

+130 *MemberNews* and email blasts issued to our members in support of their work

Child Human Rights Defenders (CHRDs)

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

+25 workshops (co)organised on CHRDs' rights, and child participation and safeguarding

+550 civil society representatives, children, other non-State actors, UN officials and State officials participated in these workshops

CRC reporting

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

23 civil society reports led or informed by children

178 children's right defenders, including 42 children (of whom 28 were girls) empowered to report to the CRC Committee

OPIC

+190 state representatives, children/CHRDs, Network members' representatives, other CSO and non-State actors, academics, and State officials from close to 60 countries were briefed on the OPIC

2 new States ratified the instrument

Guide and templates on how to draft child-friendly decisions under the OPIC developed for the CRC Committee.

WORKING GROUPS

As mentioned in the previous public annual report, the Working Group on children without appropriate parental care has in practice streamlined its activities within the Global Collaborative Platform on Transforming Children's Care. Individual Working Group members have been involved in discrete initiatives around care reform, but the Working Group has not undertaken collective action in 2022.

Working group on child participation

Composition

Conveners: World Vision International and the Child Rights Information Centre Moldova

Members: Alliance of NGOs active in Field of Child and Family Protection Moldova, Child Rights Coalition Asia, CRIN, Defence for Children International Costa Rica, Edmund Rice International, Elizabeth Fry Society of Greater Vancouver, Eurochild, Family for Every Child, Halley Movement, FOST, Foundation for Innovative Social Development, Heirs to Our Oceans (H2OO), Humanium, Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion, International Catholic Child Bureau (BICE), International Child Rights Centre (inCRC), Kindernothilfe, LUMOS, Plan International, Pratyek, Plataforma de Infancia, Red de infancia de El Salvador RIA, Save the Children International, SOS Children's Villages International, Terre des Hommes International Federation, The Learning for Well-being Foundation, World Vision International

Strategic partners: Queen's University Belfast

Key outputs

- The Working Group contributed to develop and disseminate two policy briefs for UN diplomats:
 - How to advance language on child participation in resolutions of the Human Rights Council and General Assembly
 - How to advance the rights of Child Human Rights Defenders (CHRDs) through the Universal Periodic Review (UPR)
- The Working Group convened a meeting with the Working Group on Child Participation of the CRC Committee to advance collaboration in promoting child participation in the work of the Committee and across the UN.
- The Working Group supported the child participation process for the development of the forthcoming UN Secretary General's Guidance Note on child rights mainstreaming.

Looking ahead

- Pilot a child participation strategy for child participation in the Working Group.
- Continue engagement with the Working Group on Child Participation of the CRC Committee.
- Continue advancing the calls for child rights mainstreaming at the UN level, with a focus on child participation as part of strengthening a child rights approach throughout the system.
- Roll-out the [child-friendly Guide on the Rights of Child Human Rights Defenders](#).

Working group on children and armed conflict

Composition

Convenor: Defence for Children International (DCI)

Members: Arigatou International, Child Rights International Network (CRIN), Defence for Children International (DCI), ECPAT International, Humanium, Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion, Plan International, Reprieve, Save the Children International, Terre des hommes Federation, War Child, Watchlist, Women's World Summit Foundation (WWSF), and World Vision International.

Observers: Geneva Call, Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, Reprieve, and Watchlist.

Strategic partners: Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General for children and armed conflict (SRSG CAAC) and the Permanent Representation of Belgium and Uruguay to the United Nations as coordinators of the Group of Friends on CAAC, and Chair of the CRC Committee.

Key outputs

- The Working Group issued a [statement](#), delivered by DCI, during the Interactive Dialogue with the Special Representative of the Secretary General for children and armed conflict (SRSG CAAC) at the 49th session of the Human Rights Council in March to celebrate the 25th anniversary of the CAAC mandate.
- The Working Group convened a meeting with the SRSG CAAC in March 2022 at DCI office ahead of the July Open Debate with her mandate and to set priorities for the year.
- The Working Group attended a virtual high-level side-event on *"Ending and Preventing Child Recruitment: A Discussion on the Progress Achieved and Challenges Ahead"* in March, where the SRSG CAAC and Chair of the CRC Committee were engaged on the issue of deprivation of liberty and follow-up to the recommendations on CAAC of the Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty.
- The Working Group issued a joint statement, signed by 16 organisations, as part of the urgent debate of the Human Rights Council about human rights in war-torn Ukraine in March.
- The Working Group convened a second meeting with the SRSG CAAC office in September with the participation of a representative from the EU Office of the SRSG CAAC and a representative from the Permanent Mission of Belgium to the UN (Group of Friends on CAAC).

Looking ahead

- Proactively use relevant UN human rights mechanisms (CRC Committee, UPR and others) and reinforce advocacy links between UN bodies based in New York and those based in Geneva to advance CAAC issues (Security Council and its Working Group on CAAC, SRSGs offices, etc.).
- Continue to develop strong relationships with the SRSG CAAC, CRC Committee and Group of Friends on CAAC to conduct joint advocacy and events.
- Continue to develop strong dialogue with Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council and provide inputs to their reports, as relevant.
- Work to enhance child and youth participation in the inter-governmental space on CAAC related issues.
- In cooperation with Watchlist, work to enhance accountability for war crimes and transparency in reporting.

Working group on children of incarcerated parents

Composition

Conveners: Plataforma NNAPES, International Coalition for Children with Incarcerated Parents (INCCIP)

Members: Children of Prisoners Europe (COPE), Defence for Children International, DCI Costa Rica, Elizabeth Fry Society, Plataforma NNAPES, Quaker United Nations Office, Relais Enfants Parents Romands (REPR), SOS Children's Village International, International Catholic Child Bureau (BICE), INCCIP.

Strategic partners: Penal Reform International

Key outputs

- The Working Group's co-chair and INCCIP's Chair (Prof. Loucks) attended the DCI Global Forum on Justice for Children and Deprivation of Liberty in Mauritania, which took stock of progress made since the publication of the UN Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty and mobilized key actors to trigger more action. Prof. Loucks addressed the conference on the topic of children living in prison with their parents, focusing on prevention and supporting the development of a 'roadmap for change', connecting with key partners.
- Meetings and exchanges regarding the development of a Global Toolkit on Children of Incarcerated Parents have resumed, with the support of a representative from the Global Campus for Human Rights (which produced the UN Study on Children deprived of Liberty). The concept note on the Global Toolkit will be used for fundraising in early 2023.
- Working Group members have regularly engaged with some of the CRC Committee members to discuss key issues for improving the situation of children of incarcerated parents.
- Working Group members have actively led activities to improve the situation of children of incarcerated parents in their own regions and countries:
 - Globally, the INCCIP has been conducting a research project on the impact of parents' imprisonment on child wellbeing across six different countries and, together with Families Outside (Scotland, UK), released a series of **short, multilingual videos of two young people** from different countries with incarcerated parents discussing their shared experience and advice for other young people.

- In Europe, Children of Prisoners Europe's (COPE) held an annual conference in Portugal on how to address the issue of children of incarcerated parents from an interdisciplinary approach to generate a coordinated response, which gathered more than 100 Portuguese officials and CSO representatives. COPE also organised a roundtable discussion with judges and magistrates in Poland, which provided an opportunity for judges, prosecutors and COPE members to exchange on the promotion of the best interests of children during a parent's criminal sentencing.
- In Latin America, Plataforma NNAPES (the Latin American and the Caribbean Network for Children with Incarcerated Parents) delivered 5 training workshops on the rights of children of incarcerated parents for more than 200 civil society and government representatives from the region, in partnership with the Interamerican Institute of the Child. Plataforma NNAPES also launched the **animated children's series titled "Abrazos"** ("hugs"), as the first Spanish-language children's videos to feature the voices and experiences of children with incarcerated parents.

Looking ahead

- The Working Group will continue to meet quarterly, engage regularly with members of the CRC Committee to update them on key issues, identify cases for strategic litigation support, and mobilise national NGOs to submit information to UN human rights mechanisms.
- Using its concept note, the Working Group will strive to fundraise for the Global Toolkit on Children of Incarcerated Parents, for the tool to be developed in the next two to three years.
- The Working Group will strive to develop a document providing a global overview of the issue of children of incarcerated parents or push for the inclusion of such issue in related reports.
- The Working Group will support and build on the activities led by its members at the national and regional level (such as the June 2023 COPE conference and Annual Network Meeting in Ireland, and the next INCCIP global conference in Uganda planned for 2023/2024).

Working group on children's rights and the environment

Composition

Conveners: CRC Asia and Save the Children

Members and affiliates: Amnesty International, Associated Country Women of the World, Austrian National Coalition, Children's Environmental Rights Initiative (CERI), CIEL, CRC Asia, CRIN, Environment Africa, Franciscans International, Global Action Plan, Human Rights Watch, Humanium, Make Mother Matter, Plan International, Project Dryad, Save the Children, Soka Gakkai International, Terre des Hommes, University of Strathclyde Law School (One Ocean Hub), World Council of Churches, World Vision International.

Strategic partners: Committee on the Rights of the Child Working Group on children's rights and the environment, RtHE coalition, UN Special Rapporteur on Human Rights and the environment.

Key outputs

- As a partner of the CRC Committee, the Working Group popularized broad participation of CSOs and children in the development of the CRC Committee General Comment (GC) 26 on climate change, including through providing inputs into the roadmap, participating in the **Advisory Board**, supporting regional and online consultations on the GC with CSOs and children, and contributing to substantive discussions about the drafting of the GC.
- The WG maximized the space extended by the leadership of the COP27 to mainstream child's right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment:
 - Co-organised a side event on *"Children's voices and views at COP27 and beyond"* during the September 2022 Human Rights Council session to promote child participation at COP27 and policy coherence on children's rights.
 - Provided support to members and partners in the organisation of the main session with children during the Youth and Future Generation Day at COP27 on 10 November where, engaging with adults, children and young people helped identify concrete recommendations for improving children's meaningful participation and ensure their voices are heard and considered by decision-makers at COP and beyond.

- Collaborated to develop an updated version of the **COP Fit for children publication**.
- Updated the Working Group document *"Key developments relating to child rights and the environment"* with new developments.
- In close partnership with the CERI coalition, succeeded for the first time to secure a **joint position paper on child rights at COP27**.
- The Working Group maximized opportunities for supporting the work of key Special Rapporteurs and promoting child rights and the environment through global mechanisms:
 - As part of the **How to Child Rights series**, the Working Group launched various tools for civil society aimed at advancing children's right to a healthy environment and supporting the mandates of CRC Committee, key Special Rapporteurs and the UPR process, including **Children's Rights and the Environment: Guidance on the reporting to the Committee of the Rights of the Child ; How to Advocate for Children's Rights in the Climate Crisis through the Universal Periodic Review: A case study from Australia; and How to Support the Implementation of United Nations Resolution "Realising Children's Rights through a Healthy Environment"**.
 - Held a meeting with the Special Rapporteur on Climate Change in June.
 - Regularly engaged with the Special Rapporteur on human rights and the environment (including participation in a consultation led by his mandate on a toolkit on the right to a healthy environment) and Special Rapporteur on toxics and human rights.
- The Working Group supported the CERI position paper on child rights at the Bonn climate change conference held in June 2022.
- The Working Group participated in CIEL meeting and monitored progress on strategic litigation related to climate justice and potential inputs on that for the GC26.
- The Working Group continued to support wider civil society efforts for the recognition of the right to a healthy environment at the UN General Assembly.

Looking ahead

- Revisit the Terms of Reference, role and strategy of the Working Group given the expanding membership and new developments in this thematic area, to best complement other fora for promoting children's rights and the environment and strengthen the collective work of the Working Group while supporting members' initiatives.

- Continue efforts to contribute to the development and follow-up to the GC26 once adopted.
- Using the **How To child rights tools** and in-country experience of Working Group members, support CSOs and children to improve their reporting, and follow-up to UN and regional recommendations, on children's rights and the environment to the CRC Committee, within the UPR and other human rights mechanisms, to enhance local to global advocacy.

Working group on children and violence

Composition

Conveners: Arigatou International and World Vision International

Members: Arigatou International, ATD Forth World, Bureau International Catholique de l'enfance (BICE), Defence for Children International (DCI), 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 (WWSF), War Child Holland, World Vision International and the World Organization Against Torture (OMCT).

Observers: World Council of Churches

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

Key outputs

The Working Group met five times during 2022 and the focus was on implementing the advocacy strategy in particular the development of the booklet on good practices and the blog.

- Further elaborated the Working Group advocacy strategy in particular the key messages and an Infographic summarising the main points of the strategy.
- Actively participated at the 49th session of the Human Rights Council in March through delivering an oral statement during the Interactive Dialogue with the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Violence Against Children and co-organising a side event with her office.

- Held a meeting with the Inter-Agency Working Group on violence against children chaired by Special Representative on Violence Against Children to discuss the Working Group strategy and findings of the 2020 report, calling for stronger synergies between Geneva and New York actors and the different organisations focusing on this issue.
- Held a meeting with the informal State Group of Friends on Child Rights to share findings of the report produced in 2020 and the Working Group strategy.
- Briefed the Chair of the CRC Committee about the activities and advocacy strategy of the Working Group, to garner support and recommendations for its implementation and discuss wider collaboration with the Committee.
- Developed a **blog**, with the first entry written by the CRC Committee Chair, Mikiko Otani, issued on World Children's Day in November 2022, and the second blog issued in December 2022 by Maria-Lucia Uribe, co-convenor of the Working Group, from Arigatou International.
- Developed the Terms of Reference for the consultant charged with developing the booklet on best practices in consultation with our strategic partners and members. Hiring of the consultant and the consultation process started in the last quarter of 2022.

Looking ahead

- The Working Group will engage Permanent Missions regarding best practices on countering violence against children in January 2023.
- The Working Group will convene with the full CRC Committee to present them the findings of its report and strategy and identify ways to work together.
- The Working Group will participate in the 52nd session of the Human Rights Council in March 2023 with an oral statement during the Interactive Dialogue with the Special Representative on Violence Against Children.
- The Working Group will finalise its booklet of best practices in May 2023.
- The Working Group will organise an event for the publication of the best practices booklet, possibly with children from a couple of countries selected as best practices.
- The Working Group will continue to spread its key messages through social media and blog posts to be shared periodically with Permanent Missions and other key actors.

Our Network

The Child Rights Connect network is made up of 100 **members** and **observers** that are national, regional and international organisations, coalitions and networks 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.

Our Executive Committee

From June 2022

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

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

Catherine Mbengue, African Child Policy Forum, Secretary of the Executive Committee

Maria Lucia Uribe Torres, Arigatou, Treasurer of the Executive Committee

Flutra Gorana, War Child Holland, Focal point on child participation

Maria Belen Paz Aguilar, Learning for Wellbeing Foundation, Focal point on child participation

Maria Amihan Abueva, Child Rights Coalition Asia

Until June 2022

Alan Kikuchi-White, SOS Children's Villages International, Treasurer of the Executive Committee

Chris Derksen-Hiebert, World Vision International

Interns

Ana Carla Queiroz Pinho Carlos

Anusika Vinasithamby

Constance Munch

Elise Thieffine

Francesca Rizzi

Lola Sánchez Arcos

Mariana Gomes de Carvalho

Marta Verdeille

Or Salama

Sara Michelle Pan Algarra

Consultants

Anita Goh

Annabel Trapp

Jennifer Lynn Conway (web and publications design)

Loyola Rananarison-Schäfer (communications)

Migena Gjerazi

RightsHouse – **Henrik Allfram**, **Karin**

Tengnäs, and **Vide Wassberg** (evaluation)

Silversands – **James Mallalieu**

Volunteers

Eduardo Widakowich

Laura Ndayizeye Izere

Students from the Master Traduction Spécialisée Multilingue of the Grenoble Alpes University (translation)

Staff



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Agnès Gràcia Corberó

Programme Officer



Fanny Chappuis

CRC Reporting and Programme Support



Leire Ibáñez Larrea

Network Assistant



Olivia Solari Yrigoyen

Legal Officer



Beatriz Santaemilia del Hoyo

Associate Legal Officer

FINANCES

Balance Sheet

As at 31 December 2022 and 2021 (in Swiss Francs)

Assets	2022	2021
Cash and cash equivalents	50,410	43,856
Accrued income	86,926	20,354
Prepaid expenses	37,617	24,673
Sub-total current assets	174,953	88,883
Operational Contingency Fund	-	72,950
Cash deposits (visa card and office lease)	32,002	32,002
IT equipment and office furniture	5,435	7,496
Sub-total fixed assets	37,437	112,448
Total assets	212,390	201,331

Liabilities	2022	2021
Accounts payable	27,818	10,632
Accrued liabilities	43,490	48,036
Bank overdraft	300	0
Income received in advance	25,500	0
Sub-total current liabilities	97,108	58,667
Restricted funds on ongoing projects	139,947	14,756
Sub-total non-current liabilities	139,947	14,756
Restricted capital	37,130	37,130
Restricted capital - Operational Contingency Fund	-300	72,950
Free capital	-61,494	17,828
Sub-total capital of the organisation	-24,664	127,908
Total liabilities and capital	212,391	201,331

Result of the year	2022	2021
Operating result (income minus expenses)	5,441	-2,600
Bank fees	-5,186	-3,861
Exchange differences	-27,635	31,861
Exceptional revenue, unique or one-off	0	29,334
Variation of restricted funds	-125,191	7,365
Result	-152,572	62,098

Income and operating expenses

Income	2021	2020
Membership fees	127,009	115,867
Grant/donations from members	128,718	94,839
Grant/donations from governments	680,280	659,216
Grant/donations from foundations	103,147	178,260
Grant/donations from other organisations	18,708	43,523
Other income	4,045	3,841
Total income	1,061,907	1,095,546

Breakdown of 2022 income	2022	%
SIDA	513,775	48%
Member fees	127,009	12%
Swis Federal Department of Foreign Affairs	100,000	9%
Tanya's Dream Fund	92,756	9%
Plan International	55,541	5%
Save the Children	45,984	4.3%
Ville de Genève	35,000	3%
Iceland Ministry of Education and Children	31,505	3%
UN Environment Programme	18,708	2%
Terre des Hommes	15,667	1.5%
Neo Philanthropic Foundation	7,445	0.7%
Eizabeth Fry Society of Greater Vancouver	5,037	0.5%
CDE Maroc	4,741	0.4%
Council of Europe	2,946	0.3%
National Coalition Germany	987	0.1%
Franciscans International	500	0.0%
Other income	4,306	0.4%

Operating expenses by cost centre	2022	2021
Personnel costs	826,131	858,953
Salaries and social charges	816,774	844,722
Other staff expenses	9,357	14,231
Operating costs	184,038	173,367
Office costs	85,864	66,764
Professional services	96,113	102,087
Governance and network management	0	0
Depreciation	2,061	4,516
Activity costs	46,299	65,825
Consultants	26,255	60,304
Venue and catering	7,279	0
Travel	5,299	0
Design, layout, graphics, photos	4,005	4,547
Sub-grants to partners	3,461	0
Miscellaneous	0	974
Total costs	1,056,467	1,098,146

Our donors and supporters

We would like to express our deepest gratitude to our donors, partners, and supporters. Your support has allowed us to empower children and children's rights defenders to stand up for and advance children's rights across the globe, through local to global and global to local advocacy. Your generosity is what gives children the knowledge, resources and connections they need to act as human rights defenders now, not just in the future.



Swedish International
Development
Cooperation Agency



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Swiss Federal Department
of Foreign Affairs



Tanya's Dream Fund hosted
by the Swiss Philanthropy
Foundation



Ville de Genève



Plan International Sweden



Government of Iceland
Ministry of Education and Children

Ministry of Education
and Children of Iceland



Save the Children®

Save the Children
International
Save the Children Sweden



United Nations
Environment
Programme



Terre des Hommes
Germany



NEO Philanthropy

LOOKING AHEAD

What's on in 2023?

Celebrating 40 years of Child Rights Connect and shifting the narrative with and for children

2023 marks the 40th anniversary of our existence, celebrating 40 years of coordinated child rights advocacy at the UN. It also marks 25 years since the adoption of the UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders and 75 years of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. We will make strategic use of these anniversaries to undertake critical reflections and come up with more effective strategies to strengthen the child rights movement and its response to the backlash against child rights and child human rights defenders.

Mainstreaming a child rights approach within the UN

We will continue to implement our Network advocacy strategy on child rights mainstreaming, focusing on follow up to the SG Guidance Note on child rights mainstreaming, influencing the 2024 report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights on child rights mainstreaming and his "Human Rights 75" initiative, advocating for a child rights approach to Our Common Agenda, including child participation in the 2024 Summit of the Future, to ensure that children's rights are high on the UN agenda.

Influencing and launching General Comment 26 on environment and climate change

We will continue our partnership with the CRC Committee and Terre des Homme Germany to support child participation in the development and launch of General Comment 26, including through working closely with the child advisors. We will also influence the content of the General Comment in coordination with our Working Group on the environment.

Including children's rights into CESCR's General Comment on Sustainable development

Building on the children's consultations held in 2022, we will make sure that

these will have an impact on the content of the General Comment and that this pilot participation process sets a standard for future work of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR).

Advancing discussions on children's rights in the digital environment

We will ensure that the 2023 Annual Day on the Rights of the Child of the Human Rights Council on children's rights in the digital space is a space for children and civil society to influence UN processes, in particular the 2023 UN General Assembly resolution on the same topic and the Global Digital Compact.

Influencing the 2024 Human Rights Council resolution on social protection for children

We will work on the first ever child-friendly OHCHR report, piloting a child participation process that will influence the 2024 Annual Day and resolution on children's right to social protection.

Advising Iceland on child participation and UN opportunities to advance children's rights

In the framework of a new partnership with Iceland's Ministry of Education, we will provide technical advice on how to follow up to the CRC Committee's recommendations through child participation and how to champion child rights at the international and regional level.

Advancing the rights of CHRDs at all levels

We will intensify our work in Moldova to ensure that the upcoming law on human rights defenders integrates children's rights. In Bulgaria, we will boost the agency of children at risk of or separated from their parents to shape and take forward their human rights activities. At the regional level, we will lead the development of the first Council of Europe study on child human rights defenders. At the international level, we will focus on facilitating exchanges between CHRDs and the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders.



child rights connect

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**To support our work,
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www.childrightsconnect.org/donate

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