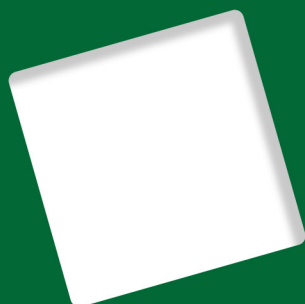
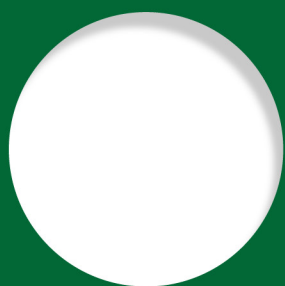




# CHILD RIGHTS ▶▶▶ CONNECT



**ANNUAL REPORT**

▶ 2024



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# INTRODUCTION

## ► Foreword from the Chairperson of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child

2024 witnessed the resilience of the global movement to uphold, promote, and defend the rights of every child, even within a diminishing space. Among the many actors driving this change, **Child Rights Connect** continues to distinguish itself as an indispensable ally and innovator in amplifying the voices of children worldwide – especially those acting as human rights defenders.

The year 2024 brought profound challenges for children's rights. Amidst conflict, displacement, inequality, and the compounding effects of climate change, millions of children continued to face grave violations of their rights. At the same time, children have shown remarkable courage, leadership, and clarity in calling for a just and sustainable future. In this landscape, the work of **Child Rights Connect** – to empower children, elevate their voices within international mechanisms, and strengthen civil society's connection with the UN human rights system – has never been more critical.

This Annual Report reflects a year of extraordinary advocacy, collaboration, and resilience. I am particularly heartened by the tireless efforts of the Children's Advisory Team, who have led advocacy efforts on issues ranging from the right to free education to environmental justice, to child-friendly governance and digital safety. Their direct participation in high-level UN discussions demonstrates what is possible when children

are respected as full rights holders and agents of change.

The Committee's work depends on the meaningful engagement of civil society and, crucially, of children themselves. **Child Rights Connect** plays an instrumental role in making this engagement possible. In a year when financial constraints threatened the functionality of the entire UN human rights system, including the Committee on the Rights of the Child's ability to conduct pre-sessions, **Child Rights Connect** worked tirelessly to ensure that the voices of children and civil society remained central in the deliberations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Looking ahead, our collective responsibility as children's rights advocates is clear: we must continue to remove the barriers that prevent children from accessing justice, we must recognize and protect child human rights defenders, and we must invest in inclusive, sustainable, and safe platforms for child participation. In all of this, **Child Rights Connect** remains a trusted partner to the Committee on the Rights of the Child and a catalyst for progress, going forward.

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**Ann Skelton**

Chairperson of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (May 2023-February 2025); Professor of Law, Leiden University and University of Pretoria

## ► About us

**Child Rights Connect** (CRCnct) is a non-governmental organisation founded in 1983 and now operates as the largest global network of child rights organisations. With 119 organisations (113 members and 6 observers), 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.



## Vision ►

**Child Rights Connect** envisions a world in which all children have their human rights respected, protected, promoted, and fulfilled, as enshrined in the UNCRC and its Optional Protocols.

**Child Rights Connect** provides a unique platform to ensure local-to-global and global-to-local advocacy, where advocacy in Geneva can draw on local and national experiences, learning and data across regions and where international commitments secured in Geneva can be integrated into local and national advocacy by members.

Through **Child Rights Connect**, civil society actors, including children, can address the international community with one global voice and have a stronger influence on political decisions. Members in turn work to integrate international commitments into local, national and regional advocacy and implementation.

## Child Rights Connect's core work consists of:

- Uniting the child rights movement, alongside the broader human rights movement and State champions, to speak with one voice with and for children in advancing key priorities and advocacy objectives
- Empowering children to claim and exercise their rights by advocating for and facilitating their participation in national, regional and international human rights mechanisms and processes, including as child human rights defenders and through strengthened national and international standards on civil and political rights
- Reinforcing children's rights advocacy at national and regional levels by empowering children and civil society worldwide to engage with the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC Committee) and the broader United Nations human rights system through information, knowledge and collaboration
- Influencing the enhancement of child rights international legal obligations and standards that States and UN mechanisms are obliged to take action on and that strengthen the rule of law
- Enhancing accountability to children by strengthening the effectiveness of the CRC Committee's monitoring processes, as well as functioning of the Treaty Body system and other key UN human rights mechanisms that are mandated to assess State compliance with their obligations
- Influencing the international political discourse and agenda by setting and promoting innovative discussions and perspectives of children's rights in a changing global environment
- Strengthening the understanding and application of child rights-based approaches among civil society, States, the UN mechanisms and the private sector by promoting the indivisibility of children's rights within the human rights, development, peace and security agendas, to ensure all children enjoy their rights, including through supporting implementation of the UN Secretary-General's Guidance Note on Child Rights Mainstreaming

## What added value do we bring?

We are an **expert organisation on, and strategic partner of, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child**, empowering civil society actors, including children, from around the world for more than 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 the broader UN human rights system.

We are the **leading organisation bringing global attention to safe, empowering, inclusive and sustained child participation and the rights, empowerment and protection of child human rights defenders (CHRDs)**.

## ► The strength of the Network

**Our Network keeps growing and reached the number of 119 organisations!**

What is unique about **Child Rights Connect** is our **nature of network**. Membership in the **Child Rights Connect** network is open to civil society organisations and networks of NGOs committed to **Child Rights Connect's** purpose of advocating for and supporting the full implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols for the realisation of children's rights worldwide (Articles 3 and 4 of the **Statutes**).

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 2024, our global engagement was enhanced with the admission to our network of fourteen new member organisations from all continents:

- **Action pour les Femmes et Enfants Marginalisées (AFEMA)** (Democratic Republic of Congo)
- **CUWEDE COD LAB** (Uganda)
- **Flames of Compassion Uganda (FLACO)**

- **International Child Welfare Organization (ICWO)** (Uganda)
- **Observatoire des Droits et du bien-être de l'Enfant pour l'Afrique Centrale (ODEAC)** (Cameroon)
- **Shalom Christian Organization (SCO)** (South Sudan)
- **SOS Oasis d'Enfants** (Democratic Republic of Congo)
- **Tanzania Youth Espouse for Gender and Development (TYEGD)** (Tanzania)
- **Loo Niva Child Concern Group** (Nepal)
- **United Global Organization of Development (UGOOD)** (Pakistan)
- **Plataforma Colombiana de Organizaciones Sociales y Populares por el Protagonismo de Niñas, Niños y Jóvenes (Plataforma 3 Voces)** (Colombia)
- **Lastensuojelun Keskusliitto (Central Union for Child Welfare, CUCW)** (Finland)
- **SOS Children's Villages Germany** (Germany)
- **The Child and Youth Friendly Governance Project (CYFGP)** (Switzerland)

We also welcomed into the Network one organisation with an observer status: the **Federal Supreme Court Justice Project Office (FSCJPO)** from Ethiopia.



*We would like to express our gratitude to Child Rights Connect for welcoming the Three Voices for Peace Platform. We are committed to working together to ensure a future in which all children have the opportunity to participate, experience peace and enjoy dignity.*

— Plataforma 3 Voces (Colombia)

With almost 80% of new member organisations based in the Global South, they bring **greater geographical diversity** to our Network, an actively pursued organisational priority.

On top of their geographic expertise, these new members bring thematic expertise on the existing focused areas such as **child participation and child human rights defenders**, as well as innovative or under-represented topics with the Network such as **child-friendly governance, girls' rights and children in vulnerable situations**.

# PROGRAMMES

## ► The permanent Children's Advisory Team: a driving force for our organisation and for children's empowerment worldwide

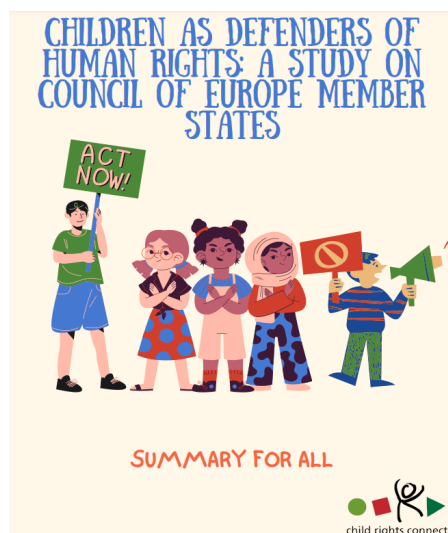
Since 2020, the **Children's Advisory Team (CAT)** has been a permanent structure that supports **Child Rights Connect** to shape and take forward activities on children's rights. The CAT in 2024 was composed of **13 child human rights defenders from all over the world** who were empowered to engage actively and build their capacity on child rights issues and advocacy on national and international level. The child advisors who are part of the CAT were between 13 and 17 years old in 2024 representing all regions of the world.



*You were really sincere in terms of protecting us and like guiding us into this space and I think it's very important because in my experiences I was always feeling very safe and that was due to the incredible work you do.* — **Catarina, 17, Brazil**

The CAT was involved in many of the achievements of the Organisation in 2024 and has enabled us to ensure that our projects reflect the voices and opinions of children. The child advisors played a key role in developing several child-friendly resources designed

to make complex information and UN and regional mechanisms accessible to children of all backgrounds. Empowering children with knowledge about their rights is essential to enabling their safe and meaningful participation.



In this context, the CAT worked on the child-friendly summary of our joint publication with the Council of Europe "**Children as defenders of human rights: A study on Council of Europe Member States**", as well as the child-friendly **support material** for the consultation on the

concept note of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child on the General Comment no. 27 to Children's Rights to Access to Justice and Effective Remedies.

Besides making human rights mechanisms more accessible for other children, the child advisors are empowered to lead their own advocacy at the international level.

Since 2023, child advisors have been actively engaged in the process of developing a new Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, focusing on the rights to early childhood education, free pre-primary education, and free secondary education ([Human Rights Council Resolution HRC/56/5](#)).



Their involvement included [writing a letter to the High Commissioner for Human Rights](#) to express support for the initiative, as well as participating in a video campaign explaining the significance of the right to education from their own lived experiences.

Two child advisors, Catarina (17, Brazil) and Freja (13, Canada), travelled to Geneva to support the adoption of the resolution during the 56<sup>th</sup> Human Rights Council session, from 18 June to 12 July 2024. With support from [Child Rights Connect](#), they took part in high-level advocacy meetings and were featured as panellists in a [side-event](#) organized by the Permanent Mission of the Dominican Republic and co-sponsored by the Permanent Missions

of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and the Republic of Sierra Leone to the United Nations Office and other international organisations in Geneva, members of the core group and the Working Group. Their direct engagement with Permanent representatives, as well as their participation in informal negotiations, were instrumental in securing consensus on the resolution.



*Last year, in my role as a child advisor for [Child Rights Connect](#), I and my fellow child advisor Catarina, from Brazil, were fortunate enough to travel to Geneva to [advocate for a new protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child](#), to make free pre-primary and secondary education available to all children.*

*We moderated and spoke at the side event and participated in the negotiations of the Human Rights Council [resolution](#) to move forward on the optional protocol. This provided me with the opportunity to share my personal experience as a child and explain why children's participation in this process is essential. [...]*

*The experience of traveling to Geneva, speaking at the UN, and meeting a panel of ambassadors, was amazing. I was treated like a peer, and felt like an ambassador myself. This experience of the UN has shaped what I think I want to do in my life: I want to go into law. Maybe even human rights law?*

*When visiting the permanent missions of Canada and Brazil, and all the wonderful people who are truly interested in what I had to say, it made me feel like my opinions mattered. When my fellow members of the Children's Advisory Team and I [wrote a letter](#), and met and delivered it to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights' people, I felt that I was really a part of something big. I felt heard, and I felt that I was taken seriously.*

*Having my mom and my supporting adult, Kirsty, there was important as well — and the support from Child Rights Connect.*

— [Freja, 14, Canada, blog post \[A Child's Perspective on the Proposed Free Education Treaty\]\(#\)](#)



Another topic on the top of the agenda of CAT – and of children’s worldwide – is climate change and its impact on children’s rights. Based on the [UN Committee on the Rights of the Child’s General Comment No. 26 on children’s rights and the environment with a special focus on climate change](#), a [school kit on climate change and environmental rights](#) was developed containing tools (presentations, activity workbooks for different age ranges, and activity guides) which children can use to introduce this topic in their own spaces be it a classroom or a community center. The resources are currently available in English, French, and Spanish, with plans to expand translations to reach a broader audience.

The child advisors also engaged with the UN Special Rapporteur on Climate Change, Elisa Morgera, during a [consultation](#) organized by [Child Rights Connect](#) in collaboration with the Working Group on children’s rights and the environment. Between September and November 2024, the Special Rapporteur conducted a series of consultations to exchange ideas on potential topics for upcoming thematic reports with States, UN agencies, children, and other stakeholders. The child advisors were able to exchange with the Special Rapporteur and peers supported by members of the Working Group to inform the priorities for the Special Rapporteur’s agenda.



*As children, we can make a difference by learning about climate change, advocating for sustainability, conserving resources, supporting green initiatives, raising awareness, joining youth movements, engaging in eco-friendly activities, participate in decision-making and influence adults to take action. Together, we can protect our rights and the planet’s future.*

— **Anghelina, 17, Republic of Moldova**

Protection from violence is another pivotal topic for children today. In November and December 2024, [two child consultations](#) took place to advise the Council of Europe on developing a Recommendation on age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education aiming to increase the protection of children from sexual violence. Our child advisors were joined by other child human rights defenders from Europe and discussed why comprehensive sexuality education should be taught and when, where, how and by whom. The child advisors also developed a [resource](#) for other children to understand the development and timeline of the Committee of Ministers Recommendation.



MEET OUR 2024

## CHILDREN'S ADVISORY TEAM



13

**CHILDREN EMPOWERED AS HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS TO ADVANCE THE REALISATION OF CHILD RIGHTS, IN LINE WITH OUR 2020-2024 STRATEGIC PLAN**



9 GIRLS | 4 BOYS



EACH SUPPORTED BY ONE OF OUR MEMBERS/PARTNERS

### AGE

13

2 MEMBERS

14

2 MEMBERS

16

4 MEMBERS

17

5 MEMBERS



### WHERE THE CHILD ADVISORS ARE FROM

Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Colombia, Democratic Republic Congo, Ecuador, Iceland, Moldova, Nepal, Palestine, Spain, Togo, Zambia

ALL REGIONS  
OF THE WORLD  
COVERED



### WHAT OUR CHILD ADVISORS SAY ABOUT THEIR PARTICIPATION IN THE CAT

"As a Palestinian refugee child, my participation in the Connecting Child Rights (CAT) Child Advisory Group has been a profound journey of empowerment and advocacy. This platform has allowed me to amplify the voices of children facing displacement and ensure that their rights and experiences are recognized globally. Through my participation, I have contributed to the formulation of policies that address the unique challenges faced by Palestinian refugee children, advocating for their rights to education, protection from violence, and active participation in decisions that affect their lives. This experience has not only strengthened my leadership skills but also reinforced my commitment to fostering a world where the rights of every child are protected and respected."

HALA, 17,  
PALESTINE



"During the year 2024, my CAT 2024 colleagues and I participated together in several activities organized by Child Rights Connect. These vitally important activities allowed us to grasp the world and show that nothing can be achieved without children. This hypothesis showed that the child is capable of defending his or her rights. [...] All these organized initiatives are the beneficial work of Child Rights Connect and its deep desire to make children the basis of their future and children's rights a priority."

ESPOIR, 17,  
DEMOCRATIC  
REPUBLIC OF  
CONGO



## ► 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 is 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.

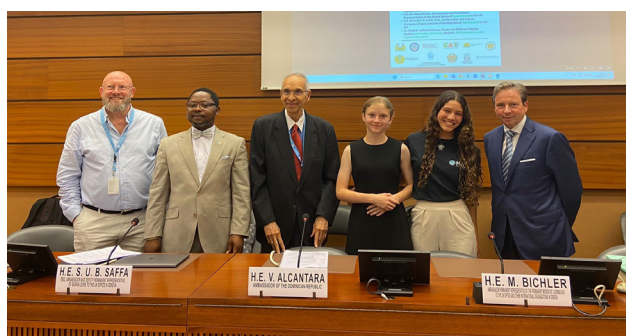
### Principles and values

A child rights-based approach underpins **Child Rights Connect**'s work with and for children, both in what it seeks to achieve and how it goes about achieving it. **Child Rights Connect** prioritises the human rights principles of equality, non-discrimination, participation and accountability. The organisation is constantly seeking approaches that are collaborative, sustainable, fair, harmless, inclusive, multipliers of knowledge, respectful, environmentally friendly and sensitive to difference and diversity.

### Mission

**Child Rights Connect** advocates for and support the full implementation of the UNCRC and its Optional Protocols for the realisation of children's rights worldwide. **Child Rights Connect** does 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.

Over the last decade, promoting and protecting the rights of children acting as human rights defenders took a prominent place within our programmatic priorities. This priority was strongly reaffirmed, with one of the strategic priorities dedicated to advancing child participation and the rights, empowerment and protection of CHRDs at global, national and institutional levels. Building on previous key achievements and supported by a number of resources and tools developed to advance the recognition of CHRDs, this strategic plan is more ambitious with respect to strengthening CHRDs' civil and political rights.



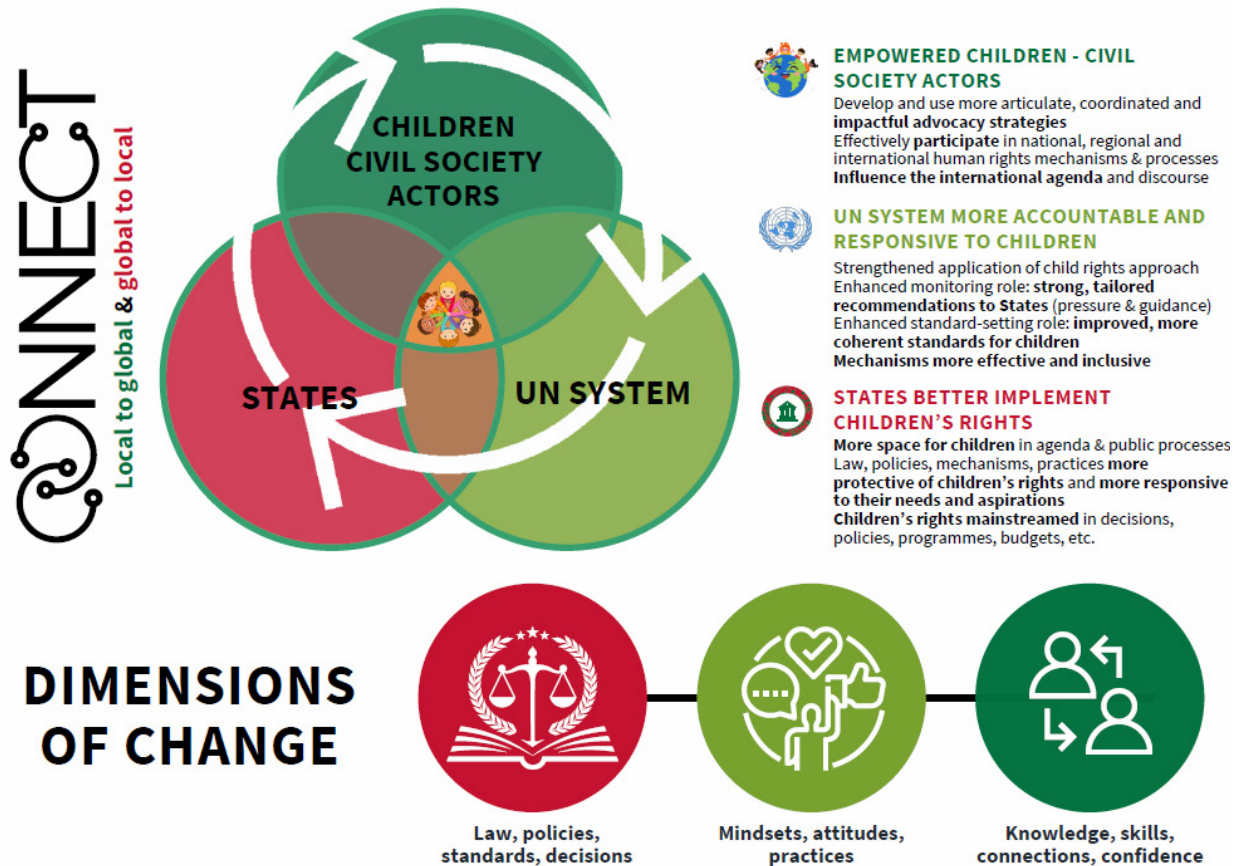
Members of the Children's Advisory Team, Catarina and Freja, shared and discussed the importance of an international treaty to make public education free from pre-primary through secondary school at a side event to the Human Rights Council.

*Images credits ©Human Rights Watch*

## Theory of Change and New Strategic Plan 2025-2029

Child Rights Connect's theory of change is represented by the graphic below.

### AGENTS AND MECHANISMS OF CHANGE



This theory of change rests on the transformative role of children as rights-holders and agents of change, and States as duty-bearers, as well as convergence between civil society actors and the UN human rights system in advancing the realisation of children's rights around the world.

As a key player situated at the intersection between rights-holders and duty-bearers, connecting civil society actors and the UN system at the international level, **Child Rights Connect** effects change through the following agents and mechanisms of change:

- Empowering children and other civil society actors
- Making the UN human rights system more accountable and responsive to children
- States better implementing children's rights

Over the last decade, promoting and protecting the rights of children acting as human rights defenders took a prominent place within our programmatic priorities.

This was strongly reaffirmed at our General Assembly 2024 when our network approved our new [Strategic Plan 2025-2029](#), with one of the strategic priorities dedicated to advancing child participation and the rights, empowerment and protection of child human rights defenders (CHRDs) at global, national and institutional levels.

Building on previous key achievements and supported by a number of resources and tools developed to advance the recognition of CHRDs, this strategic plan is more ambitious with respect to strengthening CHRDs' civil and political rights.

The new Strategic Plan for 2025–2029 was developed through an inclusive process involving consultations with the Secretariat, Executive Committee, Children’s Advisory Team, Working Groups, and key partners including the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, the UN Office for Human Rights, and UNICEF. The plan builds on the outcomes of the organisation’s 40th anniversary conference and a SWAT analysis of the previous strategy, identifying areas for improvement and greater impact.

The new plan strengthens **Child Rights Connect**’s focus on its core strengths – such as its convening role within the UN system, leadership in child participation, support for child human rights defenders, and work on child rights mainstreaming. It also responds to global challenges, including the growing pushback on children’s rights, which the network is better positioned to confront collectively. At the same time, the plan seizes strategic opportunities, such as strengthening coordination with and among our Working Groups.

## ► A reflection from Child Rights Connect’s Secretariat and Executive Committee

The year 2024 marks one of the darkest years in modern history for children, with the world experiencing the highest number of armed conflicts since World War II. More than one in six children lived in regions afflicted by war with one of the highest numbers of grave violations against children since Security Council-mandated monitoring began.

It is not only war that severely affects children’s rights, but the accumulation of crises continues, including the triple environmental planetary crisis – climate change, pollution and biodiversity loss –, the rise of extremism and polarization, as well as deepening inequalities, food poverty, displacement, and the weakening of civic space.

This state of affairs reflects a systemic erosion of respect for international humanitarian law and international human rights norms, with children being the most impacted worldwide.

This trend has also been made abundantly clear with the serious underfunding by States of the United Nations human rights architecture together with the UN liquidity crisis. Budgetary constraints have weakened the ability of the Committee on the Rights of the Child to undertake its core work, in particular, by reduced meeting time. Late confirmation of sessions and lack of availability of hybrid modalities affected the

ability for civil society – especially children themselves – to contribute meaningfully to the monitoring of the States’ implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Such measures have not only impacted the Committee, but also the work of the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and the UN human rights mechanisms as a whole, setting a dangerous precedent at a time when the world most needs robust accountability mechanisms.

**Child Rights Connect**, as a global network of child rights organisations, issued statements and letters raising its deepest concern regarding the impact on children of the unprecedented funding crisis affecting the child rights sector, including most of our member organisations, of any size and in all regions, as well as **Child Rights Connect** itself.

Many members and partners of **Child Rights Connect** have been forced to downsize or even shut down. The very future of Child Rights Connect itself hangs in the balance at a time when the role of our network has never been more vital. Proof of that is that, in 2024, 18 organisations worldwide applied for becoming member of CRCnct starting from 2025. It is reassuring to see the value that members and non-member organisations attached to the work of CRCnct.

## ► Key achievements

1

### Our critical support to ensure a meaningful engagement of civil society with the CRC Committee, amidst the UN liquidity crisis

In 2024, children's rights globally have been severely impacted by escalating challenges, making it one of the most difficult years for children worldwide.

The ongoing armed conflicts have intensified, resulting in the tragic loss of tens of thousands of young lives, while countless others have been injured or left traumatized by violence. Millions of children are also struggling with the devastating effects of malnutrition, displacement, and lack of access to basic services such as education and healthcare. In conflict zones, children are not just the victims of violence but are often specifically targeted or recruited as soldiers, subjected to sexual exploitation, or forced into child labour. The rise in global poverty and economic instability has worsened these vulnerabilities, leaving children disproportionately affected by the breakdown of social structures and governance.

Despite the global framework created to protect children's rights, such as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), there has been a marked regression in the protection and well-being of children due to significant strain on monitoring and enforcement mechanisms. This has made the need for a renewed and stronger global commitment to protecting children's rights more urgent than ever.

The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC Committee) plays an essential role in ensuring the protection and promotion of children's rights around the world. As an independent body of experts, the CRC Committee reviews State Party reports on the implementation of the UNCRC, evaluates progress in safeguarding children's rights, and offers recommendations for improvement. Its work spans a wide range of issues including child labour, education, health care, and protection from violence and exploitation.

By holding governments accountable, the CRC Committee helps ensure that children's voices are heard and their fundamental rights are respected. However, the UN financial

crisis has presented a major threat to the CRC Committee's ability to carry out its vital work.

The UN liquidity crisis, driven by unpaid contributions from member States, has disrupted key activities, such as the review of State Party reports. These financial constraints have hindered the Committee's capacity to monitor children's rights, putting vulnerable populations at even greater risk of exploitation, neglect, and abuse.

The financial difficulties have been compounded by a UN General Assembly resolution in 2023, which restricted the ability of the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG) to continue providing hybrid meeting services for official sessions in 2024. This resolution, which did not grant UNOG the mandate to continue offering hybrid meeting options, added significant logistical and financial burdens, particularly for the CRC Committee, which relies on such meetings to engage with a broad range of stakeholders. Without hybrid formats, key civil society organizations (CSOs) and experts, including those representing children's voices, face challenges in fully participating in the Committee's work.

During the 97<sup>th</sup> session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the Chairperson, Mrs. Ann Skelton, emphasized the urgency of addressing the situation, highlighting the fact that in 2024 alone, tens of thousands of children had been killed or injured in conflicts, with millions more facing malnutrition. She stressed that the erosion of children's rights cannot continue, and that the CRC Committee needs more resources to fulfil its mission to protect and promote these rights effectively. She also expressed concern about the pushback on children's civil rights, which although not always in the headlines, are undermining the recognition of children as rights holders. The Chairperson called for a greater commitment to empowering the CRC Committee, especially given the current backlog of State Party reports to be reviewed.

In response to these challenges, **Child Rights Connect** has been a critical advocate for the

continuation of the CRC Committee's work. The organization has actively highlighted the impact of the UN financial crisis and the General Assembly's resolution on the CRC Committee's ability to function.

One of the notable actions taken by **Child Rights Connect** was the joint letter signed by nearly 200 civil society organizations worldwide, sent to the Permanent Missions to the United Nations in Geneva and New York and the Secretary-General of United Nations in May 2024 to raise concerns about the cancellation of the May pre-session of the CRC Committee. The pre-sessions play a crucial role in ensuring that children's rights are adequately represented and discussed before official sessions. The cancellation of this space hindered the ability of stakeholders, including children, to engage with the CRC Committee, limiting opportunities for meaningful dialogue and advocacy on children's rights. This collective action, supported by civil society, underscored the urgency of addressing the financial and logistical challenges facing the CRC Committee.

**Child Rights Connect** also reinforced its concerns during the 97<sup>th</sup> CRC session, urging the UN and its member States to prioritize funding for the CRC Committee's work. Our organisation called for urgent action to secure the financial stability needed to continue safeguarding children's rights. Despite the financial setbacks, **Child Rights Connect**, in collaboration with UNICEF and other partners, managed to find a solution through collaborative efforts, to allow the May pre-session to continue, albeit in a modified format. The pre-session was held online, ensuring that key elements of the CRC Committee's work could proceed despite the financial constraints. As a result, Argentina and Ecuador, two countries scheduled for review under the simplified reporting procedure, were able to engage with the Committee and progress in their commitment to uphold children's rights.

The resilience of **Child Rights Connect**, UNICEF, and other partners was pivotal in maintaining the momentum of the CRC Committee's

work. Their joint efforts demonstrated the importance of collaboration in overcoming the financial and logistical challenges posed by the UN current situation. The online pre-session, though not the ideal format, allowed for the participation of stakeholders and kept the review process moving forward.

In addition to these efforts, **Child Rights Connect** has continued to provide critical coordination and support to civil society organisations. Despite the financial and logistical obstacles, **Child Rights Connect** has been instrumental in ensuring that almost 250 CSOs and over 90 children were able to participate in the CRC reporting process. This ongoing support has ensured that children's voices, as well as the expertise of civil society, remain central to the CRC Committee's work in monitoring and promoting children's rights worldwide. By continuing to facilitate this engagement, **Child Rights Connect** has played a vital role in amplifying the voices of those most affected by the challenges to children's rights, ensuring they have a platform to influence change and accountability.

In conclusion, while 2024 has been a challenging year for children's rights, with many obstacles still ahead, the continued commitment of **Child Rights Connect** and their partners has been essential in maintaining the focus on protecting children's rights globally. The financial constraints and logistical challenges faced by the UN have not stopped the critical work of the CRC Committee, but they have highlighted the need for greater support and flexibility in how meetings and engagements are held. Hybrid formats, which allow for greater inclusivity and participation, are particularly important in ensuring that all voices, regardless of location or circumstance, can be heard.

Moving forward, **Child Rights Connect** will continue to advocate for solutions to these challenges, ensuring that the Committee's vital work can proceed without interruption, and that the rights of children remain a global priority.

In 2024, **Child Rights Connect** made significant strides in advancing its strategic goal to strengthen the rights, empowerment, and protection of CHRDs together with CHRDs themselves – achieving tangible impact through a wide range of activities and collaborations!

In March 2024, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders (SR HRDs), Ms Mary Lawlor presented to the 55th Session of the Human Rights Council the first ever UN report on child and youth defenders: *"We are not just the future": challenges faced by child and youth human rights defenders*. The focus of the report was the result of long-term advocacy by **Child Rights Connect**, highlighting the urgent need for greater attention to the growing number of child human rights defenders. **Child Rights Connect** played a central role in ensuring the active participation of child human rights defenders throughout the consultation process. **Child Rights Connect** worked closely with SR HRDs to integrate children's voices into all the events leading up to the report's release.

To celebrate such a timely report, **Child Rights Connect** partnered with Save the Children, Amnesty International, and the Special Rapporteur to host a [side event](#) at the 55<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Human Rights Council. The event, titled "Advancing the Rights of Child and Young Human Rights Defenders: Implementing the Recommendations of the Special Rapporteur on the Situation of Human Rights Defenders" was a key moment for continued dialogue on the protection of child and youth defenders. It attracted the attention of approximately 180 participants both in-person and online. Four child and youth HRDs from around the globe delivered powerful interventions and reflected on the findings and recommendations of the report.

During the event, the Special Rapporteur reflected on how to develop a real partnership between the UN and children and young people that can translate into more effective recognition of and protection of child and youth defenders:



*"Even as late as 4-5 years ago, proposing to include a child HRD in a panel discussion at UN human rights fora would have been met with disbelief or an immediate NO. It was considered too complicated, in some cases not safe, or worse, not necessary.*

*I am very happy to see the momentum that seems to be building over the past years, with important milestones, including the Annual Day of General Discussion by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2018; the joint statement by Luxembourg last March, on behalf of over 60 states, on child defenders, and the Youth Advisory Group, consisting of 12 inspiring young activists from around the world who work on a broad range of issues.*

*And this is exactly what is needed: a systematic, meaningful and routine inclusion of child and young HRDs in all our work at the UN, including the Human Rights Council and special procedures.*

*It should finally become something natural, not an outlier, not an opportunity to showcase something. I am stressing this not to minimize its importance, but on the contrary, to emphasize its crucial relevance to hear the voices of young activists.*

*Earlier today, I had a meeting with the President of the Human Rights Council. I stressed to him as well the importance of maintaining the option for hybrid participation in the HRC which had been unceremoniously dropped this session. Civil society as a whole, and in particular child and young defenders need this feature and have benefitted from it.*

*Finally, just for me I can pledge that I am to continue systematically including children and young people who are human rights defenders, and integrating across all the work I do for the remaining time of my mandate."*

The young HRDs' interventions during this event highlighted not only the challenges they face in their activism but also the unique opportunities provided by the SR HRDs and **Child Rights Connect** to amplify their voices at the global level. They emphasized the importance of the report's recommendations, which help to ensure their rights are better protected, and called for ongoing advocacy at the UN level to raise awareness about the challenges specific to child and youth defenders.



### Strategic Vision for Promoting and Protecting the Rights of Child Human Rights Defenders (CHRDs)

This strategic vision aims to mobilize and inspire civil society, governments and donor communities to advance, promote and protect the rights of Child Human Rights Defenders (CHRDs).

It is a shared vision codesigned by children and adult representatives of human rights-focused civil society organizations and UN agencies in a series of workshops between January and May 2024. We are coming together as children, UN bodies, and international and local civil society organizations because we want to see commitments, support and actions made by wider civil society, governments and donor communities to protect and uphold the rights of child human rights defenders.

#### Definition of a Child Human Rights Defender (CHRD)

We will follow the definition used in *The Rights of Child Human Rights Defenders: Implementation Guide*,<sup>3</sup> which builds on the 2018 Day of General Discussion as:

"Children who take actions to promote, protect and fulfill human rights, including children's rights, are human rights defenders, even if they do not see themselves as such, or are not considered and called as such by others."

Child Rights Connect, *The Rights of Child Human Rights Defenders: Implementation Guide* (2020)



Following the report by the Special Rapporteur, **Child Rights Connect** – together with Save the Children and Better by Codeign – initiated a collaborative process to develop a joint **Strategic Vision for Promoting and Protecting the Rights of Child Human Rights Defenders**. The objective was to establish a dedicated community committed to advancing the implementation of the report's recommendations.

More than 50 representatives from civil society, UN bodies and children, contributed to the development of the Strategy ensuring it reflects the needs and aspirations of the children it aims to protect. Published in September 2024 and officially launched in March 2025, this Vision is a key milestone for

**Child Rights Connect** to further advance, promote and protect the rights of child human rights defenders by building bridges among different sectors of the human rights community to bring new actors to the table. It serves as a roadmap for empowering children globally by outlining the actions that should be taken by the human rights community to support them.

It has already gained widespread **endorsement** from major child rights organizations, both within the civil society and the UN. The CHRD Vision is available in multiple languages, including **English, French, Spanish and Arabic**, along with a child-friendly version in **English, French and Spanish** to mobilize and inspire civil society, governments and donor communities.

**Child Rights Connect's** increased efforts to support CHRDs in 2024 were made possible by the launch of a new three-year project (2024-2027), **"The Now and the Future: Advancing the Rights, Empowerment and Protection of Child Human Rights Defenders"** funded in part by the Global Affairs Canada. Through a mutually-reinforcing 'global to local' and 'local to global' approach, the project will support our efforts to test and embed global standards, practices and resources in priority countries and use country findings to inform global work and standards in the years to come.

## OUR THEORY OF CHANGE

### VISION

Child Human Rights Defenders—regardless of their gender, sexual orientation and gender identity, socio economic status, disability, race, political opinion, caste, geographical region, ethnicity, religion or beliefs, migration status and any other characteristics—are free, safe, supported and empowered to participate in decisions affecting them, to fully exercise their civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, and to seek accountability. States and other duty-bearers fulfill their obligations and develop mechanisms to support CHRDs and protect them and their rights.

### MISSION

To build a diverse and intergenerational global community of advocates across civil society, CHRDs, governments, UN bodies and donors, who will stand up, defend and promote the rights of CHRDs and provide protection and support, as defined by children. Efforts will ensure gender-equality and an intersectional approach that takes into account the needs of diverse CHRDs, including those who face the greatest barriers.

*Strategic Vision for Promoting and Protecting the Rights of Child Human Rights Defenders, 2024*

In 2024, **Child Rights Connect** continued to lead efforts to embed children's rights across the United Nations system and beyond. Building on the momentum created by the 2023 release of the UN Secretary-General's [Guidance Note on Child Rights Mainstreaming](#) – a document made possible thanks to [years of Child Rights Connect's advocacy](#) – this year marked a transition from commitment to implementation.

Through strategic partnerships, advocacy, and support for its members and Working Groups, **Child Rights Connect** helped drive real progress in how children's rights are recognized, protected, and promoted across multiple levels of UN operations.

### Strengthening the work of the UN Human Rights Office on children's rights

**Child Rights Connect** played a key role in [influencing the biennial Human Rights Council resolution on the rights of the child \(A/HRC/RES/55/29\)](#), which, for the first time, includes a dedicated section on child rights mainstreaming. The resolution calls:

- On the UN and States to promote diverse and child-friendly participation modalities in decision-making forums at all levels.
- On the Secretary General to strengthen the UN Human Rights Office's capacity to mainstream child rights, with a focus on participation and safeguarding.
- On the UN Human Rights Office to produce a report on child rights mainstreaming across the UN system, as a way to monitor the implementation of the Guidance Note.

This progress builds on the UN Human Rights Office's [March 2024 report](#) on a child rights-based approach which offered clear recommendations – informed by **Child Rights Connect** and its members –, as well as on the [2024 Annual Day on the Rights of the Child](#), where **Child Rights Connect** actively supported children's meaningful participation.

### Elevating children's rights in the Pact for the Future

**Child Rights Connect** also engaged in advocacy around the UN Summit of the Future and its outcome document, the Pact for the Future. In a complex and closed consultation process, **Child Rights Connect** focused on:

- Coordinating advocacy among members and ensuring information flow,
- Supporting [contributions](#) to the second draft of the Pact, and
- Co-organizing an [official side event](#) with partners including the CRC Committee and UNEP, where a child advisor from Moldova addressed participants on climate and child rights.

As a result of collective advocacy efforts, children's rights were partially included in the final Pact, marking a modest improvement from earlier drafts, though still falling short of the robust action needed.

### Building diplomatic support in Geneva

In November, **Child Rights Connect** worked with its Working Group on Child Participation to convene a roundtable with Geneva-based Permanent Missions. The goal was to build stronger political momentum to mainstream children's rights across the UN human rights mechanisms, in particular at the Human Rights Council. This roundtable:

- Catalyzed renewed momentum to counter growing pushback on child rights,
- Enhanced dialogue between UN actors, States, and civil society on coordinated strategies, and
- Generated actionable ideas to ensure safe, ethical, and meaningful child participation, especially on sensitive issues.

This initiative exemplifies the role of our network in bridging civil society and diplomatic actors to sustain child rights at the core of multilateral human rights efforts.

## Pioneering child participation within UN Special Procedures

**Child Rights Connect** also helped advance child rights mainstreaming within the UN Special Procedures system. In partnership with its Working Groups on Child Participation and Children's Rights and the Environment, **Child Rights Connect** supported the [piloting of a long-term child participation mechanism](#) with the Special Rapporteur on Climate Change in October.

This marked a significant shift – from previous ad hoc consultations to a more structured and sustained process that engaged children from the outset. **Child Rights Connect** facilitated consultations between the Special Rapporteur and a diverse group of children, including members of the Children's Advisory Team, to help shape the mandate's priorities. In their recommendations, published in multiple languages, the children proposed ways to ensure ongoing engagement. The Special Rapporteur has also shared her [reflections on this process](#), affirming her commitment to keeping children's voices central to her work.

In December, to promote this approach more broadly, the **Child Rights Connect** Working Group on Child Participation organized a briefing at the Annual Meeting of Special Procedures, where a call was made to institutionalize child participation across all mandates.

## Strategic, system-wide impact

Throughout 2024, we continued to move the child rights mainstreaming agenda forward across the UN system – ensuring that children are not only considered but actively involved in shaping decisions that affect them.

Whether by influencing high-level resolutions, engaging directly with UN mechanisms, or enabling children's voices to be heard in international processes, **Child Rights Connect** continues to be a driving force in turning policy into practice – and ensuring that children's rights are at the heart of global governance.

In 2024, the global normative pushback against children's rights – particularly around gender and civil and political rights – intensified.

In response, **Child Rights Connect** put increased efforts to advance understanding and protection of children's civil and political rights at the global level, in particular at the UN Human Rights Council (Council or HRC). Despite opposition from some States, **Child Rights Connect's** relentless and strategic advocacy efforts ensured that children's voices were prioritized in crucial UN resolutions and decision-making processes, further cementing their role as active participants in shaping international human rights frameworks. Below, we highlight some of our most impactful achievements in keeping children's civil and political rights at the core of global decision-making.

### Mainstreaming children's rights in resolutions on civil and political rights

A major achievement in 2024 was **Child Rights Connect's** successful advocacy to maintain or include references to children's rights in different Council resolutions on civil and political rights. Historically, such resolutions have often overlooked children.

In particular, **Child Rights Connect** undertook advocacy on [resolution HRC/RES/56/10 on peaceful protests](#). Negotiations were challenging, with some States resisting the inclusion of stronger protections for children. However, thanks to **Child Rights Connect** and its members:

- Recommendations stressing the need to integrate full consideration of the rights of the child in guidance for law enforcement was maintained, and
- A call to pay particular attention to the safety and protection of girl human rights defenders in the context of peaceful protests was achieved! One of the most impactful moments for **Child Rights Connect** in 2024 came during the 57<sup>th</sup> Session of the UN Human Rights Council

when the [resolution HRC/RES/56/10 on "Equal Participation in Political and Public Affairs"](#) was adopted with specific provisions for children's rights. For the first time, the resolution included dedicated paragraphs highlighting the importance of children's participation in political and public affairs, recognizing their right to be heard in decision-making processes that impact their lives.

Throughout the session, **Child Rights Connect** focused on advocating for the civil and political rights of children, particularly their right to participate in political and public life, as enshrined in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. To bolster this advocacy, **Child Rights Connect** organized a side event co-sponsored by multiple international organizations and UN member states, titled "Supporting Children's Participation in Political and Public Affairs." The event was attended by over 100 people both in-person and online and featured discussions on the challenges children face in participating in political affairs, as well as best practices for fostering greater child engagement in decision-making.

Key recommendations from the event included strengthening legal frameworks to guarantee children's right to participate in political and public affairs, investing in mechanisms that ensure children's voices are heard, supporting the leadership development of children – especially girls – and fostering ongoing dialogue between children and authorities. Notably, the resolution also included two new provisions recognizing the transformative potential of education and the negative impact of hate speech on children's participation in political and public life.

### A seat at the table: child participation in the establishment of an optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child

2024 also saw a historic development in advancing the right of children to participate in public affairs at the international level.

Through the tireless efforts of [Child Rights Connect's Working Group on Children and the Right to Education](#), a landmark [resolution HRC/56/5](#) was adopted by consensus at the UN Human Rights Council on July 10, 2024.

The resolution set up an open-ended intergovernmental working group to explore the creation of the Optional Protocol, with the aim to explicitly recognize that the right to education includes early childhood care and education, and explicitly include States obligations to provide at least one year public pre-primary free education and public free secondary education under international law. One groundbreaking aspect of this resolution is its explicit commitment to child participation, as it calls for children's views to be included in the development of the new Optional Protocol.

The Children's Advisory Team of **Child Rights Connect** played a vital role in this achievement. Since 2023, child advisors from this group had been consulted and actively engaged in advocacy efforts (read section [The permanent Children's Advisory Team: a driving force for our organisation and for children's empowerment worldwide](#)).

## Shaping the future of children's rights

In 2024, **Child Rights Connect** achieved historic milestones in advancing the understanding of and realisation of the civil and political rights of children on the global stage. From embedding child participation in the development of a new Optional Protocol to mainstreaming children's rights in HRC Resolutions on civil and political rights, **Child Rights Connect** successfully reinforced the role of children as active agents of change in shaping international human rights standards. These advancements are part of a broader, ongoing effort to ensure that children's voices are heard, valued, and integrated into the frameworks that govern their rights.

Despite facing resistance from certain States, **Child Rights Connect's** strategic advocacy and coalition-building efforts ensured that the rights of children remained at the forefront of global discussions. Moving forward, **Child Rights Connect** is committed to continuing its work with UN member States and other stakeholders to strengthen child participation, challenge misconceptions, and ensure that international frameworks reflect the full breadth of children's civil and political rights. As **Child Rights Connect** looks ahead, the goal remains clear: empowering children to be key stakeholders in shaping the future of their rights.

## ► Additional programme highlights

# 2024

## A YEAR IN REVIEW

### JANUARY-MAY

A series of workshops with children, civil society organizations and UN agencies to codesign the **Strategic Vision for Promoting and Protecting the Rights of Child Human Rights Defenders**

### MARCH

Side-event at the Human Rights Council with the Special Rapporteur on the situation of HRDs on her **first ever UN report on child & youth defenders**

The highest level of child participation reached so far at the **Annual Day on the Rights of the Child**

### APRIL

**Joint letter to the UN SG and Permanent Missions on the cancellation of the May pre-session of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child** signed by almost 200 organisations

Launch of our three-year project (2024-2027) "**The Now and the Future: Advancing the Rights, Empowerment and Protection of Child Human Rights Defenders**"

### MAY

**Our vital support to ensure that the CRC pre-session** could be held online for civil society representatives from Argentina and Ecuador

### JUNE

During the 56th HRC session, **two of our child advisors supported the adoption of a resolution** to develop a new Optional Protocol on education to the Convention on the Rights of the Child

### AUGUST

**Draft Pact for the Future (Rev2.): Statement on Child Rights and Child Participation by the ImPACT Coalition** - which Child Rights Connect is part of

### SEPTEMBER

Children's rights mainstreamed in Human Rights Council **resolution on participation in political and public affairs**

**10th anniversary of OPIC-CRC:** our statement celebrating 10 years delivering justice to children

### OCTOBER

Publication of our **Strategic Vision for Promoting and Protecting the Rights of Child Human Rights Defenders**

### NOVEMBER-DECEMBER

**Two child consultations** to advise the Council of Europe on age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education

# 2024: A YEAR IN REVIEW

## Enabling civil society to improve accountability to children through the CRC Committee

We've empowered civil society, including children, to engage in reporting to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC Committee) for impactful recommendations to States.



**332**

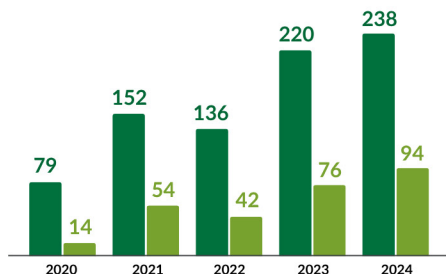
Children's rights defenders, including **94 children**, from various countries around the world

empowered to report to the Committee and engage in its pre-sessions. Among them, there were **229 women and girls**.



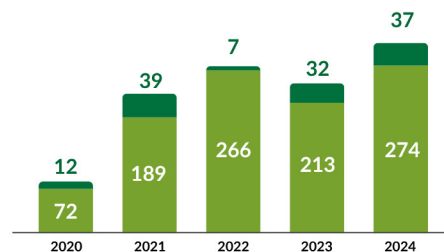
**CSOs & children  
empowered to act**

All the civil society actors surveyed reported that our technical assistance had been useful to prepare for the pre-session and/or children's meeting with the Committee, with **82% indicating it was "extremely useful"**.



**# of children's rights defenders supported**

2024 marks the highest # of **adults** and **children** supported since in the last 5 years.



**Non-State CRC submissions**

2024 counted with **274 non-state submissions** to the Committee, incl. **37 reports informed or made by children**. This is the highest level of reporting in the last 5 years.

### A unique role

*"The Child Rights Connect team is providing an excellent technical assistance to countries in CRC reporting"*  
– 2024, Our feedback survey

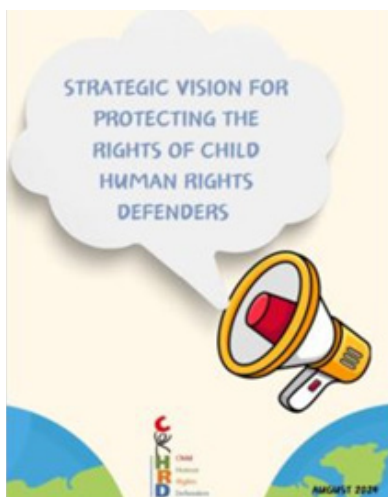
### Child participation fostered, including in the implementation of CRC recommendations to States

**AFRICA:** 339 defenders, incl. 80 children, inspired on how to engage children in follow up to human rights mechanisms, including CRC Committee recommendations, through 3 online workshops with How To Child Rights.

Read our impact story here: <https://childrightsconnect.org/our-impact/>

## ► Our child-friendly multilingual tools development and publication in 2024

Several multilingual tools for CHRDs/children were (co)developed/published in 2024, in consultation with our Children's Advisory Team (CAT) and other CHRDs, to empower children to effectively engage in advocacy before the UN human rights system and/or at the national level.



### Strategic Vision for Promoting and Protecting the Rights of Child Human Rights Defenders (child-friendly version)

The child-friendly version of the Strategic Vision for Promoting and Protecting the Rights of Child Human Rights Defenders ([CHRD Strategic Vision](#)) that defines commitments, support and actions that the human rights community should take in support of CHRDs. To help children understand the Strategic Vision for Child Human Rights Defenders, we developed the document on protecting and supporting children who stand up for their own human rights or the rights of others.

[English](#) | [French](#) | [Spanish](#) | [Arabic](#)



### A summary about the Council of Europe's study on children as human rights defenders

A summary of the first ever study in Europe that looks into the situation of child human rights defenders.

[English](#) | [French](#) | [Spanish](#)



### School kit to help children understand their right to a clean and healthy environment

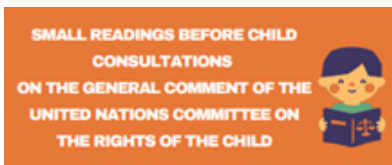
Developed by Child Rights Connect's CAT, [the kit](#) contains a presentation, 2 activity booklets for different age ranges and an activity guide for facilitators. The tools in the kit can be used by children to introduce this topic to their peers and in their own classrooms.

[English](#) | [French](#) | [Spanish](#)



## Report and roadmap of the consultations on age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education

In November and December 2024, two consultations took place with 11 children to advise the Council of Europe on developing a Recommendation on age-appropriate comprehensive sexuality education. Have a read [here!](#) The child advisors also developed a resource for other children to understand the development and timeline of the Recommendation. You can find this document [here!](#)



## Information on the CRC General Comment 27

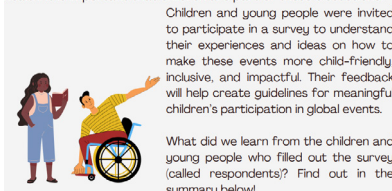
Child Rights Connect has developed child-friendly background information on General Comments for children to engage in the development of the CRC General Comment no. 27 to Children's Rights to Access to Justice and Effective Remedies, as well as in future General Comments.

[English](#) | [French](#) | [Spanish](#)



## PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN IN GLOBAL EVENTS SURVEY RESULTS 2024

Global events bring together decision-makers from around the world to discuss crucial issues like education, climate change, and health. It is important that children are part of these discussions.



Children and young people were invited to participate in a survey to understand their experiences and ideas on how to make these events more child-friendly, inclusive, and impactful. Their feedback will help create guidelines for meaningful children's participation in global events.

What did we learn from the children and young people who filled out the survey (called respondents)? Find out in the summary below!

## Participation of children in global events - survey results

In 2024, a survey was launched in English, French and Spanish by Child Rights Connect in cooperation with Dialogue Works campaign to gather insights from children and young people about their involvement in global events. The survey results help to understand their experiences and ideas on how to make such events more child-friendly, inclusive and impactful in order to draft guidelines for meaningful children's participation in global events.

A total of 124 children and young people took part in the survey. Child Rights Connect compiled the results in a child-friendly report. See [here!](#)



## A roadmap on a new Optional Protocol to the UNCRC

Child Rights Connect developed a child-friendly roadmap on the development of a Fourth Optional Protocol to the UNCRC on free pre-primary and secondary education, for children to follow the process. See [here!](#)

# 2024 IN NUMBERS

## ► Child Human Rights Defenders (CHRDs)

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

**3** workshops with children and civil society organizations and UN agencies to codesign our Strategic Vision for Promoting and Protecting the Rights of CHRDs

**180** attendees at our joint side-event of the Human Rights Council to celebrate the first-ever UN Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders report on child and youth human rights defenders

**+100** people joined our side-event of the Human Rights Council on “Supporting children’s participation in political and public affairs”

The highest level of child participation at the Annual Day on the Rights of the Child reached with our support and the participation of two advisors from our Children’s Advisory Team

## ► Network

**119** members and observers from 48 countries

**+65%** of our Network organisations operate in the Global South

**110** MemberNews and email blasts issued to Network organisations in support of their work

## ► CRC reporting

**37** civil society submissions in respect to the 34 countries which pre-session or session were held during the year

**274** civil society reports led or informed by children

**332** civil society actors, including 94 children (of whom 58 were girls) empowered to report to the CRC Committee

**+200** civil society organisations signed our joint letter on the cancellation of a pre-session of the CRC Committee sent to Permanent Missions to the United Nations in Geneva and New York and the Secretary-General of United Nations

## ► Publications and communications

**8** new multilingual resources developed to help children engage in advocacy (7 tools, in consultation with our CAT) and adults to support child human rights defenders (1 tool)

**15** individual or joint statements, letters or submissions delivered at the UN level

**5** side-events or consultations organised or cosponsored at the UN level

**3%** increase in the number of Facebook page followers compared to 2023

**+35,000** new users of our websites in total

Our CRC reporting contacts shared our publications with +900 adults and +1400 children

# WORKING GROUPS

## ► Working group on child participation

### Composition

**Conveners:** Child Rights Information Centre (CRIC) Moldova (January – October 2024), Child Friendly Governance Project and Save the Children International (from October 2024 onwards)

**Members and affiliates:** Alana Institute, The Alliance of Active NGOs in the field of Child and Family Social Protection (APSCF) Moldova, Bureau International Catholique de l'Enfance (BICE), Child Friendly Governance Project, Child Rights Coalition Asia, Defence for Children International Costa Rica, Doncel, ECPAT (End Child Prostitution and Trafficking) International, Edmund Rice, Eurochild, Family for Every Child International, EKAMA Development Foundation Tanzania, Elizabeth Fry Society of Greater Vancouver Canada, Fondation Apprentis d'Auteuil International, Halley Movement, Heirs to Our Oceans, Humanium, International Child Rights Centre (InCRC) Korea, ISI, Kindernothilfe Germany, Learning 4 Wellbeing Foundation, Lumos, 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, Children Rights International Network (CRIN), Foundation for Innovative Social Development, Farm Orphan Support Trust (FOST), Pratyek, and Red Para La Infancia y la Adolescencia de El Salvador

**Strategic partner:** Queen's University Belfast

### Key outputs

- To ensure that children and young people can shape the development of rights-based guidelines for meaningful child participation in global events (such as HRC sessions or COPs), the Working Group, in collaboration with OHCHR and Queen's University Belfast, conducted a global survey and established a virtual drafting group. A total of 124 children and young people from across the world participated in the survey (more details here), and four children from different regions are now contributing to the virtual drafting group alongside four adults.
- As part of a joint initiative by the Working Group on Children's Rights and the Environment and the Working Group on Child Participation, a collaboration with the Special Rapporteur on Climate Change (SRCC) has been established to pilot a long-term child participation mechanism within the SRCC mandate. To ensure meaningful engagement from the outset, the SRCC consulted with a group of children from across the world on the priorities of her mandate and on ways to establish an ongoing dialogue with children. The children's recommendations are documented [here](#), and the SRCC's reflections are available [here](#). As a follow-up, the SRCC directly engaged with children and young people during her visit to Vanuatu and highlighted protection of children's rights in the face of the climate crisis in her [statement/preliminary findings](#).
- The Working Group put together a [joint statement on child rights mainstreaming](#) during the Human Rights Council 55th session delivered by Terre des Hommes International Federation on 14 March 2024 at the Human Rights Council Annual full-day meeting on the rights of the child.

- The Working Group on child participation hosted an expert workshop with Permanent Missions on child rights mainstreaming (CRM) at the Human Rights Council on 18<sup>th</sup> November 2024. This three-hour meeting brought together 30 participants, including over 20 member states, and was co-sponsored by Uruguay, the EU Delegation, Germany and Slovenia as well as OHCHR. UNICEF, penholder of the Secretary General Guidance Note on child rights mainstreaming, also intervened during the meeting. The workshop generated momentum to further advance CRM in the HRC from States and UN partners, including concrete ideas and strategies to strengthen coordination between States and NGOs on child rights advocacy, to raise awareness and build more support for children's rights (especially on the most sensitive topics) and to strengthen modalities for the safe, meaningful and ethical child participation in the work of the HRC.



**Expert workshop on child rights mainstreaming at the HRC – 18<sup>th</sup> November 2024, Geneva**

*Images credits  
©Save the Children  
International*



- The Working Group contributed to a lunch briefing on child rights mainstreaming in the work of Special Procedures during the annual meeting of the Special Procedures on 11 December 2024, through a statement

delivered by the co-convenors on behalf of the Working Group on child participation and the Working Group on children's rights and the environment. The briefing was an opportunity to initiate a dialogue with both thematic and country-specific mandate holders on ways to strengthen a child rights perspective in their work, share good practices of collaboration on child rights between mandate holders and opportunities to further strengthen joint ways of working, including through procedures for safe, meaningful and ethical child participation in their work. The Working Group also issued a [joint statement](#) during the annual meeting itself delivered by World Vision.

## Looking ahead

**Objective 1:** Advance the institutionalisation of meaningful and ethical child participation in the UN system under the child rights mainstreaming agenda

- Continue advocacy with Permanent Missions in Geneva to integrate child rights and participation into Human Rights Council (HRC) resolutions and working methods.
- Collaborate with UN entities and mechanisms to embed child participation as a core element of child rights mainstreaming.
- Strengthen global and local advocacy to raise awareness of child rights mainstreaming, targeting governments, embassies, UN agencies, and civil society organisations.

**Objective 2:** Advance the recognition of children's civil and political rights and children as human rights defenders (CHRDs)

- Promote awareness and implementation of children's civil and political rights at both global and national levels.
- Advocate for increased recognition, support, and protection of child human rights defenders, and promote a sector-wide understanding of CHRDs' rights.

### Objective 3: Strengthen collaboration on child participation across the Network

- Facilitate regular peer learning, knowledge exchange, and joint initiatives among Working Group members.
- Contribute to the development and dissemination of collective standards on meaningful child participation – within the Working Group and in collaboration with other **Child Rights Connect** working groups.

### Links

- » [Participation of Children in Global Events, Survey results - 2024](#)
- » [Summary Child consultations with the Special Rapporteur on climate change \(in English, French, and Spanish\) - 2024](#)
- » [Statements, 55th Session of Human Rights Council - 14 March 2024](#)
- » [Statement at the conclusion of the country visit to Vanuatu by the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change, Ms. Elisa Morgera - Port Vila, 5 December 2024](#)
- » [Summary of the consultations on the priorities for the future thematic reports of the UN, Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights in the context of climate change - 12 December 2024](#)
- » [Statement on Mainstreaming Child Rights in UN Work final - 2024](#)

## ► Working group on children and armed conflict

### Composition

**Conveners:** Defence for Children International (DCI)

**Members and affiliates:**

Arigatou International, Care International, Child Rights International Network, Defence for Children International, ECPAT (End Child Prostitution and Trafficking), Plan International, Save the Children, Terre des hommes International Federation, War Child, World Vision International

**Observers:** Geneva Call, Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack, Watchlist, Justice Rapid Response

**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 CAAC in Geneva, Committee on the Rights of the Child

### Key outputs

- The Working Group convened a meeting with SRSG-CAAC in March 2024, sharing activities and common action between the SRSG-CAAC Office and the members of the Working Group. We have also established the proactive policy to invite the CRC Committee Chair and focal point for CAAC to join the meeting. A second meeting with the European Liaison office of the SRSG-CAAC took place in September 2024.
- As per the [Working Group's work plan for 2024](#), a joint Working Group side-event was organised during the HRC 55 session:

[This special high-level side event \(4<sup>th</sup> April\) on accountability for grave violations of children's rights, using Palestine as a current case study of flagrant violations and impunity, was co-sponsored by the Group of Friends \(GoF\) on CAAC. Beyond a distinguished panel with the two SRSGs on CAAC and on VAC \(Violence Against Children\), the Chairperson of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and the President of DCI, the \[Ambassador of Belgium introduced the panel on behalf of the GoF, while a specialist of\]\(#\)](#)

the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs made an important intervention from the floor, same as Ukraine and other Permanent Missions. Through their collective expertise and advocacy experience, they underscored the gravity of the situation and called for immediate action to address the plight of children caught in conflict zones. More than 440 million children live in conflict-affected situations, where more than 27,100 grave violations against them have been verified by the UN in 2023 alone. New and evolving conflict dynamics highlight the vulnerable environment of children in war, despite existing legal instruments, mandates, and accountability mechanisms. Discussions focused around the persistent lack of accountability for crimes against children, which continues to undermine peace processes worldwide.

- In the spirit of bringing closer CAAC agendas in Geneva and New York, we organised a hybrid workshop in New York during the High Level Political Forum in July 2024. Entitled “Justice for Children in Armed Conflicts, Justice for All”, it took place on 8 July 2024 in New York. The event gathered a large number of speakers and experts both online and in person to discuss the critical issues facing children in conflict zones and the ongoing efforts towards justice and accountability. Among the speakers, one Afghan young man with lived experience as a child.
- On the 2024 work plan, it was included in the Global Conference on Justice for Children Deprived of Liberty in Geneva on 17-18 December 2024. In addition, there are two chapters of the Global Study that are very relevant to the Working Group agenda, the one on deprivation in the context of armed conflict and the other on national security contexts. Furthermore, we had agreed with the OHCHR that given the CAAC agenda in Geneva in 2025-2026, the Conference could be the opportunity to have direct input, including from child participants and youth with lived CAAC experience as children.

The Global Conference was a successful event that gathered 150 participants from over 50 countries including 25 children and youth. Among them a strong delegations

from CAAC countries (Palestine, Yemen, Lebanon...) that brought direct advocacy and contribution to the first two days of the Conference dedicated to children deprived of liberty, including a special side-event on Palestinian children deprived of liberty and a special photo exhibition, *Children of a lesser god*, on these children bringing not only images but most of all the real stories of these children deprived of their liberty and of their childhood and who suffer from an additional violence from the dehumanizing language of some member states and media.

The high-level opening panel of the Global Conference included a video statement of the Norwegian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr Espen Barth Eide, several **Child Rights Connect** members NGOs including from other Working Groups (e.g. the one on children and violence and the one on children of incarcerated parents).



Image credits ©Defence for Children International

The CAAC plenary session was one of the most successful, including CRC Committee former Chair and President of **Child Rights Connect**, Mikiko Otani, HRW, PRI, UNODC, the Office of the SRSG-CAAC and some major witnesses, Omar Khadr, a detainee from Afghanistan who spent 10 years of his childhood in Guantanamo prison, and Tia, a child from Lebanon.

Last but not least, CAAC specialists, representatives and children had the opportunity to participate in the third day of the Conference (consultation on General Comment 27 of the CRC Committee) and put the CAAC agenda on the issues to be included on its theme, child rights access to justice and effective remedies. A child-led event on the impact of armed conflict to children has brought a number of questions related to CAAC and generated interactive dialogue with three members of the CRC Committee present and other participants.

## Looking ahead

The Conference fostered synergies to strengthen collective action for children's rights, and to promote policies and practices focused on prevention and reintegration. Participants developed key advocacy messages for future high-level forums, including the upcoming [World Congress on Justice with Children](#) in Madrid on 2-4 June 2025 which has included CAAC on its agenda. These messages underlined the need for shaping efficient global policies and practices for children deprived of liberty in the context of armed conflict.

The December Conference also showcased innovative practices that enable children's meaningful and effective participation in justice processes. These practices, shared by experts and practitioners from different countries, offer valuable models for implementation in diverse global contexts. This experience could be used in 2025-2026 in other fora that can feed into the report of the High Commissioner (to be submitted to the 60th session of the Human Rights Council in September 2024) and to the resolution to be adopted in the 61st session of the Human Rights Council in April 2026.

The Working Group CAAC will continue to:

- Promote increased participation of children and youth in inter-governmental discussions on CAAC-related matters.
- Include children in the activities of the Working Group, working with the Children's Advisory Team.
- Foster robust relationships with key entities like the SRSG-CAAC, CRC Committee (two new focal points on CAAC), and Group of Friends on CAAC to organise collaborative advocacy initiatives and events.
- Actively engage with pertinent UN human rights mechanisms, such as the CRC Committee and UPR, to advocate for CAAC issues and strengthen the coordination between New York and Geneva-based UN bodies.
- Cultivate an open dialogue with the Special Procedures of the Human Rights Council and provide relevant insights for their reports.

## ► Working group on children's rights and the environment

### Composition

**Conveners:** Save the Children International and Child Rights Coalition Asia

**Members and affiliates:** Alana Institute, Asia-Pacific Regional Conference on Early Childhood (ARNEC), Austrian National Coalition (DKA Austria), Child Rights Coalition Asia (CRC Asia), Child Rights Coalition Cambodia, Child Rights International Network (CRIN), Child Rights Information Centre (CRIC) Moldova, Environment Africa, Franciscans International, Global Action Plan, Heirs to Our Oceans, Humanium, Human Rights Watch, Make Mothers Matter, Plan International, Plataforma de la Infancia, Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO), Save the Children International, SOS Children Villages International, Terre des Hommes, Strathclyde Law School University, World Vision International, Project Dryad, Amnesty International, World Council of Churches, Soka Gakkai International, Centre for International Environmental Law (CIEL)

**Strategic partners:** Office of the Special Rapporteur on Climate Change, Secretariat of the Aarhus Convention and OHCHR

### Key outputs

**Outcome 1.3:** Global and national legal and policy frameworks on the rights, empowerment and protection of CHRDs are strengthened, in particular with respect to CHRDs' civil and political rights

- [Series of peer exchange sessions](#) on strengthening child voices in climate action, featuring [How to Support Child-Led Reporting to the United Nations on Climate Change and the Environment](#) in November – December 2024.
- Established relationship with the [Aarhus Convention on Access to Information, Public Participation in Decision-making and Access to Justice in Environmental Matters](#), facilitated child participation in their meetings and succeeded in integrating child rights in its deliberation and children are now part of the network Youth and Environment Europe.

- Delivered statements at Human Rights Council sessions focused on environment and climate change to highlight the importance of CRC General Comment 26 on children's rights and the environment, with a special focus on climate change, and the recognition of the child right to a clean, healthy and sustainable development.

**Outcome 2.5:** UN human rights mechanisms coherently enhance standards and practices to provide accountability to children

- Joint work with [Child Rights Connect](#) Working Group on Child Participation: Supported initiatives of the Special Rapporteur on Climate Change (SR on CC) in making its processes inclusive of children's participation:
  - » 5 October 2024 Dialogue of SR on CC with Children; Child-friendly information about the [dialogue](#) and also on its [results](#)
  - » Draft [informative brief](#)
- Lobbied for the mainstreaming of children's right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment in at least on the following occasions:
  - » Organization (with World Vision and Save the Children as lead) of a side event during the World Health Assembly on 29 May 2024
  - » [Side Event on achieving climate justice for children](#) during the 57th Session of the Human Rights Council on 16 September 2024
  - » Annual Conference of the Aarhus Centers on 14 October 2024
  - » Aarhus Convention Task Force Meeting on Access to Information on 7-8 November 2024
  - » Aarhus Convention Task Force meeting on Public Participation in December 2024
- While there are no parties from the Asia and the Pacific to the [Aarhus Convention](#), the networks and information gained from the Working Group's engagements of the organizations pushing for an ASEAN

Declaration on Environmental Rights and its action plan have been consulted by Ms. Fiona Marshall, Secretary to the **Aarhus Convention** Compliance Committee and an Environmental Affairs Officer with the **Aarhus Convention** Secretariat, before giving her intervention at a regional activity led by the ASEAN Intergovernmental Commission on Human Rights (AICHR) on 6-8 November 2024. Because of this cross work, Ms. Marshall was able to highlight good practices and their benefits to States Parties of the Aarhus Convention. Some ASEAN Member States have been leading a pushback on human rights elements of the Declaration e.g. not recognizing the rights of indigenous communities and environmental rights defenders.

- » The engagements of different members allowed the working group to assess COP processes and the key advocacy points to make COP inclusive of children's right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment
  - » [Instituto Alana](#) (also advocating for a COP for children)
  - » [CRIN - assessment](#) and support to [declaration by young people](#)
  - » Plan International (statements [1](#) and [2](#))
  - » Save the Children ([promotion of children's voices](#), [analysis](#))

This information is crucial reference for some members in determining strategic advocacy measures with their respective networks (e.g. CRC Asia realized a need to further study how it can support children's voices while also weighing risks to child

participation and efficient use of resources in advocating for children's participation in decision-making on issues of environment and climate change.

- Drafting of advocacy tools:
  - » Contributing to the [How to Child Rights Guidance on Advancing children's right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment: guidance on General Comment NO.26](#).
  - » Various statements at global meetings and events, such as the Human Rights Council, meetings of the Aarhus Convention, World Health Assembly.

## Looking ahead

New co-conveners assumed their roles in February 2025. The working group began discussions on the 2025 workplan with further deliberation scheduled for the next meeting in May 2025.

To include promotion of GC26 at international and regional levels and also localization through the continued promotion and use of developed materials:

- Popularization of GC26 – different versions in different languages [here](#)
- Implementation Guide/Toolkit (being finalized and specific aspects for development in 2025 and widely disseminated and used for training in different regions and countries)
- [School Kit on Children's Environmental Rights and Climate Change](#)

## ► Working group on children of incarcerated parents

### Composition

**Conveners:** Plataforma regional por la defensa de los derechos de niñas, niños y adolescente con referentes adultos privados de libertad (NNAPES), International Coalition for Children with Incarcerated Parents (INCCIP)

#### Members and affiliates:

Bureau International Catholique de l'Enfance (BICE), Children of Prisoners Europe, Defence for Children International (DCI), DCI Costa Rica, Elizabeth Fry Society, Quaker United Nations Office, Plataforma regional por la defensa de los derechos de niñas, niños y adolescentes con referentes adultos privados de libertad, Relais Enfants Parents Romands, SOS Children Villages International, International Coalition for Children With Incarcerated Parents (INCCIP), Penal Reform International, International Institute for Child Protection, BUUFF Sverige, Families Outside, Lancashire Constabulary, NHS Social Worker, Prison Fellowship International, SEUM (child welfare practice), The Bridging Group, University College Cork Incarcerated Parents Working Group, Prison Reform Trust

**Strategic partners:** Office of the Special Rapporteur on Climate Change, Secretariat of the Aarhus Convention and OHCHR

### Key outputs

- The Working Group continued to meet quarterly.
- Membership of the Working Group is growing, and the Working Group has a reciprocal agreement with the Working Group on Children and Violence to share information and invite attendance to each other's groups where relevant.
- The Working Group supported the submission of Information to the UN Human Rights System.

Mobilisation of Working Group members and other national NGOs through **Child Rights Connect** to submit information to UN human rights mechanisms (CRC Committee, UPR, Special procedures, Human Rights Council,

etc.) on the human rights of children with parents in prison.

The COPE Network has provided a significant contribution to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's [General Comment 27](#) which focusses on Children's Rights to Access to Justice and Effective Remedies (29 August 2024).

- » This General Comment aims to clarify the terms, approaches and actions that States should take to implement the right of all children to access justice and effective remedies when their rights under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child fail to be respected.
- » In its submission, the COPE Network highlighted the unique and often overlooked challenges faced by children with a parent in prison in accessing justice, including exclusion from legal processes and a lack of awareness about their rights.
- Individual members of the Working Group have been working actively on topics that support the aims of the group, such as hosting international conferences, events, and webinars; collating information on relevant legal decisions internationally; and addressing international gatherings such as the ICPA (International Corrections & Prisons Association), Defence for Children International, and the Global Prison Nursery Network to promote the rights of children when a parent is incarcerated.
- Individual members of the Working Group have also been learning from and collaborating with each other on shared issues, such as the Game With Mum & Dad organised globally to build connections between children and their parents in prison and discussions with judges throughout Europe regarding the sentencing of parents.
- » All Working Group members to seek information on strategic litigation/ relevant cases-decisions happening in their country or region
- » At least 4 cases were uploaded during the year

- Led by Working Group member DCI, the Working Group supported the implementation of the Roadmap to Action on a Global study on children deprived of liberty 2023-2024 regarding the chapter on children with incarcerated parents.
- » Working Group Representatives participated in at least one activity related to the Global Study

## Looking ahead

Many of the actions in the current work plan are ongoing, but it does add that the information about direct input and inclusion for improved child participation, should be a key point. During the final Working Group meeting of 2024, the members agreed that the voices of all children are to be valued and should be heard, and the members of the Children's Advisory Team (CAT) would be instrumental in making this happen. The Co-convenors will discuss the CAT team participation in a project or submissions relating to children of incarcerated parents in the near future. Additionally, one of the outgoing CAT members from Canada has expressed interest at being involved in this Working Group in some capacity. It has also been suggested that the need for more information on what work is being done internationally is vital to our work and to look at option to create groups that could participate in meetings at a local level. These subjects will be on the agenda for discussion at the next Working Group meeting and added to the work plan.

### Work plan activities 2025:

- UN Global Toolkit on children with parents in prison: support United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) with fundraising, incorporate and coordinate actions with the Global Campus for Human Rights team.
- Identify, upload, and share legal decisions and best practices where the best interest of the child is taken into consideration before making a decision.
- Follow-Up Global Study on Children Deprived of Liberty Relationship building and consolidation with Committee on the Rights of the Child: plan event for interaction with members of the CRC Committee to highlight issues relating to children with parents in prison.
- Produce a briefing about children of incarcerated parents (CIP) at Global level and/or influence reports and data collection efforts carried out by other actors.
- Develop and implement a mechanism for improved child participation in the Working Group: Engage with existing peer-led networks of young people with personal experience of a parent's incarceration and explore opportunities for collaboration.
- Reflect on actions further to democratize our work in different non-English-speaking countries.
- Other strategic actions:
  - » Collaborate more effectively across Working Groups to improve progress on shared aims
  - » Mobilise Working Group members and other national NGOs through **Child Rights Connect** to submit information to UN human rights mechanisms (CRC Committee, UPR, Special procedures, Human Rights Council, etc.) on the human rights of children with parents in prison
  - » Continue to support DCI with development and implementation of the Roadmap to Action on children deprived of liberty regarding children with incarcerated parents

## ► Working group on children and the right to education

### Composition

**Convener:** Human Rights Watch

**Members and affiliates:**

African Child Policy Forum, Avaaz, Dublin City University, Education International, Global Campaign for Education, Global Initiative for Economics, Social and Cultural Rights, Girls Not Brides, Global Campaign for Education, Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion, International Council of Women, Organisation for Early Childhood Education, Malala Fund, Make Mothers Matter, Plan International, Red Clade, Right to Education Initiative, Sesame workshop, Their World, UNESCO, World Vision

**Strategic partners:** Office of the Special Rapporteur on Climate Change, Secretariat of the Aarhus Convention and OHCHR

### Key outputs

**Human Rights Council (HRC) Resolution:**

Following extensive advocacy by the Working Group, the Human Rights Council adopted a [resolution](#) introduced by Luxembourg, the Dominican Republic, and Sierra Leone, and co-sponsored by 46 additional states. The resolution establishes a working group tasked with [drafting a treaty](#) that recognizes every child's right to early childhood education, free pre-primary, and secondary education. It also ensures children's participation in the treaty's development.

**Side Events:** The Working Group organized two side events during the March and June HRC sessions. The March event featured a video statement from Catarina, **Child Rights Connect's** Child Advisor, along with presentations from Human Rights Watch and Girls Not Brides. The June event focused on children's perspectives on free education and their involvement in the treaty drafting process. Two CAT members moderated the event and delivered statements.

**Advocacy by Child Rights Connect's Children's Advisory Team (CAT):**

The CAT drafted a [letter to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights](#) advocating for free pre-primary and secondary education and the

creation of a new treaty. The letter was delivered by child advisors in Geneva, who also spoke at the side event and participated in the resolution negotiations. Additionally, a social media video and a child-friendly webpage were launched to promote the initiative (see Highlights 4. Successful advocacy at the Council to advance children's civil and political rights/Child Human Rights Defenders amid pushback).

**Academics' Letter:** The Working Group secured the support of 70 scholars and experts from 30 countries for a letter noting that international law has not kept pace with research on the benefits of free education.

**Joint NGO Letter:** 21 NGOs signed a joint letter to missions of Member States in Geneva in advance of the June-July HRC session, urging support for the resolution.

**Regional Briefings:** On 14 February 2024, the Working Group supported a regional briefing for Latin America and the Caribbean to discuss strengthening the right to free education. The Working Group also helped organize a briefing hosted by Sierra Leone and The Gambia for African states to discuss the development of a new optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and a similar briefing in June hosted by Kazakhstan, Cyprus, and Kyrgyzstan for Asia-Pacific countries. Speakers included Girls Not Brides, Human Rights Watch, and Malala Fund.

**Webinar:** On 30 May 2024, the Working Group hosted a webinar for NGO representatives on strengthening the right to education initiative. Speakers included representatives from Global Campaign for Education, Girls Not Brides, OMEP (World Organization for Early Childhood Education), Sierra Leone Children's Forum Network (supported by Plan International), and Human Rights Watch.

**Strategy Meeting:** On 16 January 2024, the Working Group held a strategy meeting in Geneva to plan advocacy for 2024. During the meeting, CAT members shared insights on involving children in the advocacy process. The Working Group also briefed eight members of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the initiative's progress.

## Looking ahead

- Continue building support among member states for the new Optional Protocol and encourage them to engage constructively in the September 2025 meeting of the intergovernmental working group.
- Expand engagement and advocacy efforts with civil society, including collaboration with national governments.
- Continue working with the Children's Advisory Team on child-led advocacy for the Optional Protocol and collaborate with other child-led organizations and networks to support child participation.
- Focus on ending exclusion and discrimination in education for girls who are pregnant, parenting, or married. Ensure the new subgroup provides a platform for organizations, advocates, and activists to engage in joint global efforts, promoting cross-learning and cross-regional advocacy.

- Increase engagement with Treaty Bodies to address a broad range of human rights issues related to the exclusion of girls, such as the right to education, sexual and reproductive rights, social protection, etc.
- Mobilize members to monitor the right to education.

## Links

- » [Ghana's support for new Free Education treaty crucial, Graphic - 7 May 2024](#)
- » [Africa: Pre-Primary Education for Children Benefits Everyone, AllAfrica - 20 June 2024](#)
- » [South Africa Strengthens the Right to Education, Human Rights Watch - 18 September 2024](#)
- » [Time to champion free education, Bangkokpost - 15 November 2024](#)
- » [Why Australia should support a global right to free education, Canberra Times - 11 February 2025](#)

## ► Working group on children and violence

### Composition

**Conveners:** Arigatou International and World Vision International

**Members and affiliates:**

Arigatou International, Bureau International Catholique de l'enfance (BICE), Defence for Children International – International Secretariat, Defence for Children International – Costa Rica, ECPAT (End Child Prostitution and Trafficking), International Movement ATD Fourth World, Kindernothilfe, Plataforma de Organizaciones de Infancia, Plateforme CDE Maroc, Plan International, Save the Children International, SOS Children's Villages International, Terre des Hommes International Federation, OMCT – World Organization Against Torture/SOS Torture, War Child Holland, Women's World Summit Foundation – WWSF, World Council of Churches, World Vision International

**Strategic partners:** Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children; World Health Organization, UNICEF

### Key outputs

- Delivered an oral [statement](#) during the Interactive Dialogue with the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children on her report on the topic of Children on the Move at the margins of the 55<sup>th</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council. The statement was co-signed by several members of the Working Group on Children and Violence.
- Finalization of the publication [Eliminating Violence Against Children: Promoting the adoption of effective measures for ending violence against children through human rights engagement](#). The publication showcases successful examples from seven countries – Colombia, Indonesia, Montenegro, Paraguay, Sierra Leone, Sweden and Zambia – identified by their commitments, policies, actions and progress made to end violence against children as a national priority.

It identifies 12 effective measures grouped

into four critical areas: Commitment, Leadership, and Authority to Act; Sufficient Knowledge and Resources; A Multi-stakeholder Approach; International Cooperation and Accountability; and it provides 10 actionable recommendations for States to implement these strategies.

- Translation of the Publication into [Spanish](#).
- Launch of the Publication during a side event organized on 10 September 2024 during the 57<sup>th</sup> session of the Human Rights Council. With more than 120 representatives of civil society and Permanent Missions to the UN in Geneva, and about 50 individuals joining online, the publication was launched. Ambassadors from the Permanent Mission to UN Geneva and representatives from the seven countries shared their experiences. Key speakers included Dr. Najat Maalla M'jit, UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children, H.E. Mr. Gustavo Gallón Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary - Colombia, Ms. Maria Lucia Uribe, Executive Director, Arigatou International - Geneva, Ms. Sabine Rakotomalala, Senior Technical Advisor World Health Organization (WHO), Ms. Brikena Zogaj, Senior Advisor on Child Protection World Vision International. Ms. Anne-Marie Vuignier, UN Representative at World Vision moderated the discussion. The event was organized in collaboration with the Permanent Mission of Colombia to the UN in Geneva, the World Health Organization and the UN Secretary-General on Violence Against Children.
- Development of Publication brochure in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).
- Dissemination of Publication Brochure during Global Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence Against Children held in Bogota in November 2024. 1.000 brochures were distributed to participants.
- Two meetings with the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children (SRSG on VAC), Dr. Najat Maalla M'jid, were held on 11 March and 13 September 2024.

## Looking ahead

- Organize Side Event during the 58<sup>th</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council on Accountability and Action in Ending Violence Against Children.
- Engage with the SRSG on VAC in the roll out of the Pathfinding 2.0 Global Alliance.
- Support WHO in the follow-up of the pledges made by governments during the Global Ministerial Conference in Bogota and the planning of the celebration of the first year after the Ministerial Conference.
- Continue dialogue with Permanent Missions on the implementation of pledges and accountability to end violence against children.
- Collaboration with the CSO Forum and the Alliance for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action for joint advocacy to prevent the de-prioritization of Ending Violence Against Children (EVAC) investments in light of ongoing aid cuts.

## Links

- » Publication Eliminating Violence Against Children: Promoting the adoption of effective measures for ending violence against children through human rights engagement. Click to download it in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).
- » Oral Statement delivered during the Interactive Dialogue with the UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence Against Children on her report on the topic of Children on the Move at the margins of the 55<sup>th</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council. Click [here](#).
- » Brochures of the Publication in [English](#) and [Spanish](#).
- » [News](#) about the launch of the Publication.
- » Social Media News - Facebook
  - » [Meeting with SRSG on Violence Against Children](#) – 11 March 2024.
  - » [Meeting with SRSG on Violence Against Children](#) – 13 September 2024.
  - » [Livestream Launch of the Publication](#), 11 March 2024.
  - » [News about Launch of the Publication](#), 11 March 2024.

# ORGANISATION

## ► Our Network

The **Child Rights Connect** network is made up of 113 **members** and 6 **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

**Maria Herczog**, Family Child Youth Association (Eurochild), *President* (until June 2024)

**Mikiko Otani**, Child Rights Coalition Asia, *President* (elected in June 2024)

**María Belen Paz Aguilar**, Learning for Wellbeing Foundation, *Vice-President*

**Catherine Mbengue**, African Child Policy Forum, *Secretary*

**Maria Lucia Uribe Torres**, Arigatou, *Treasurer*

**Flutra Gorana**, War Child Holland, *Member*

**Maria Amihan Abueva**, Child Rights Coalition Asia, *Member* (until June 2024)

**Leo Ratledge**, Child Rights International Network, *Member*

**Dreeni Geer**, Save the Children International, *Member* (until June 2024)

**Hagar Russ**, Save the Children International, *Member* (elected in June 2024)

## ► International Secretariat

### Staff



**Alex Conte**, Executive Director



**Fanny Cachat van der Haert**  
Programme Manager (until June 2024)



**Rossella Urru**, Grant Manager  
(since August 2024), Officer in charge  
(since November 2024)



**Agnès Gràcia Corberó**  
Head of Programmes



**Zsuzsanna Rutai**  
Child Empowerment and  
Safeguarding Officer



**Fanny Chappuis**  
Programme Officer, CRC Reporting



**Leire Ibáñez Larrea**  
Network and Programme Officer



**Imen Talhaoui**  
Associate Programme Officer



**Maria Giulia Vassallo**, Programme  
intern (until March 2024), Associate  
Programme Officer (since April 2024)



**Ana Dangova Hug**, Child Empowerment  
and Safeguarding Officer (maternity  
cover, until March 2024)

### Interns

Emma Longhini, Maria Giulia Vassallo,  
Inés Suñer Soler, Antoine Mitterhammer,  
Pallavi Baraya, Salvador Campbell Drummond  
Borges, Leanna Schuler, Nishu Afobunor

### Consultants

Aude Defline, Jennifer Lynn Conway

### Volunteers

– Annalisa Baruffi, Martina Burrone,  
Auramaria Castiblanco, Emma Longhini,  
Cloé Mini, Jade Robert

– Translation: Students from the Master  
Traduction Spécialisée Multilingue of the  
Grenoble Alpes University

# FINANCES

## ► Balance Sheet

as at 31 December 2024 and 2023 (in Swiss Francs)

<b>Assets</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2023</b>
Cash and Cash equivalents	16'643	92'487
Receivables	42'656	58'800
Prepaid expenses	8'512	11'243
<b>Current assets</b>	<b>67'811</b>	<b>162'530</b>
Funds reserved for operational contingencies	96	-
Cash Deposits (lease and credit card securities)	32'315	32'157
IT equipment and office furniture	2'304	3'844
<b>Non-current assets</b>	<b>34'715</b>	<b>36'001</b>
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>102'526</b>	<b>198'531</b>

<b>Liabilities and capital</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2023</b>
Accounts payable	16'822	45'956
Accrued liabilities	35'949	18'376
Bank overdraft	-	7
Income received in advance	79'590	34'410
<b>Current liabilities</b>	<b>132'361</b>	<b>98'749</b>
<b>Restricted funds on ongoing projects</b>	<b>9'422</b>	<b>43'000</b>
Restricted capital	37'130	37'130
(Uncovered) / free capital	-76'386	19'652
<b>Capital of the organisation</b>	<b>-39'256</b>	<b>56'782</b>
<b>Total liabilities and capital</b>	<b>102'526</b>	<b>198'531</b>

<b>Result of the year</b>	<b>2024</b>	<b>2023</b>
Operating result	-135'370	-4'963
Bank fees	-3'316	-2'238
Exchange differences	5'789	-8'301
Exceptional revenue, unique or off-period	3'279	-
Variation of restricted funds	-16'422	96'947
Variation of unrestricted funds	50'000	-
<b>Result of the year (before the allocation to/use of the capital)</b>	<b>-96'040</b>	<b>81'445</b>

## ► Income and operating expenses (in Swiss Francs)

Income	2024	2023
Membership fees	147'959	143'202
Grant/donations from members	21'283	68'521
Grant/donations from governments	613'926	575'275
Grant/donations from foundations	50'000	141'357
Grant/donations from other organizations	13'286	62'872
Member emergency support	-	64'120
Other income	7'376	11'068
<b>Total income</b>	<b>853'830</b>	<b>1'066'415</b>

Breakdown of 2024 income	2024	%
Swedish International Development Agency	424'825	50%
Global Affairs Canada	141'601	17%
Membership fees	147'959	17%
Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs	47'500	6%
Private Foundation	50'000	6%
Council of Europe	13'286	2%
Plan International	21'283	2%
Other income	7'376	1%

Operating expenses by cost centre	2024	2023
<b>Personal costs</b>	<b>778'401</b>	<b>811'502</b>
Salaries and social charges	773'579	799'390
Other staff expenses	4'822	12'112
<b>Operating costs</b>	<b>168'576</b>	<b>144'748</b>
Office costs	76'830	76'473
Professional services	90'206	66'684
Depreciation	1'540	1'591
<b>Activity costs</b>	<b>42'223</b>	<b>115'128</b>
Consultants	7'304	4'988
Venue and catering	2'658	15'290
Travel	4'442	37'709
Design, layout, graphics and photos	4'180	4'180
Sub-grants to partners	23'639	52'961
<b>Total costs</b>	<b>989'200</b>	<b>1'071'378</b>

## ► Our donors and supporters

We express our deepest gratitude to our donors, partners, and supporters who have continued to help us advance children's rights and give a voice to children to effect change around the world.



Swedish International  
Development Cooperation  
Agency



Global Affairs  
Canada



**FDFA**  
Swiss Ministry  
of Foreign Affairs

Swiss Federal Department  
of Foreign Affairs



Plan International  
Sweden



Council of Europe

# LOOKING AHEAD

## ► What's on in 2025?

### **Elevating our role in the development of the How to Child Rights series to advancing children's rights**

The How to Child Rights Series was initiated by Save the Children and developed in close collaboration with **Child Rights Connect** and a range of partners to advance children's rights. The series of tested practical tools, case studies and guides offer condensed and essential knowledge for civil society practitioners who wish to strengthen programming and advocacy for and with children. **Child Rights Connect** had contributed to several tools and played a key role as part of the Management Team. We will strengthen our commitment played a key role as part of the Management Team. We will strengthen our commitment and leadership by hosting and managing the Series. As such, we will support the development of guidance and case studies and convene interdisciplinary and cross-regional peer-learning and collaboration across civil society, academia, the United Nations, the African Union and the European Union Commission and other institutional bodies, with a particular expansion to the Middle East Region.

### **Calling for the prioritization of children's rights among the donor community**

For several years, we've been facing an increased backlash against child rights and a shrinking space for civil society. These have translated into reduced funding for civil society actors generally. The financial crisis affecting the UN also expands to civil society and the child rights sector, with a clear deprioritisation of children's rights among donors in the recent years. This has been strongly felt by **Child Rights Connect** and its members and has limited our work and capacity. If the year 2024 marked a turning point, the outlook is

not improving. We will continue to mobilize and call for the strengthening of civil society space and the prioritization of children's rights among the donor community.

### **Strengthening the protection of CHRDs in the digital environment**

While technology and the digital environment open a wealth of activism opportunities for child human rights defenders, they also expose them to new risks. Ensuring that CHRDs are safe and can practice their rights to the fullest is essential in all settings. This is why part of our project "[The Now and the Future: Advancing the Rights, Empowerment and Protection of Child Human Rights Defenders](#)" will focus on how to better protect child human rights defenders online. We will collect information, opinions and experiences of children who stand up to protect human rights in the digital space (as well) and address the barriers to their online protection and engagement.

### **Supporting the development of the General Comment 27 of the CRC Committee on children's rights to access justice and effective remedies**

**Child Rights Connect** will pursue its efforts in supporting the development of General Comment 27 of the CRC Committee on children's rights to access justice and effective remedies. We will mobilise civil society actors to ensure they engage in the consultation process and provide inputs to the draft general comment. Together with our Children's Advisory Team and UNICEF, we will develop some child-friendly information on the general comment alongside a methodology to consult with children on the draft. We want children to genuinely and meaningfully be consulted and have a say on the content of this general comment.



The Child Rights Connect team during the General Assembly 2024

*Images credits ©Child Rights Connect*



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