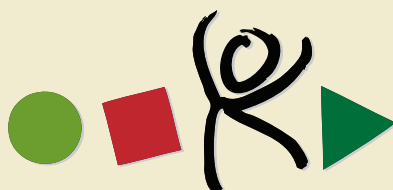


Annual Report 2011



NGO Group for the Convention
on the Rights of the Child

The NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child (NGO Group) is a global network of 80 national and international NGOs committed to ensuring that all children fully enjoy their rights as defined by the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). Since its establishment in 1983 to influence the drafting of the CRC, the NGO Group has developed leading expertise in child rights and the work of the Committee at international level, providing a coordinated platform for NGO action and playing a central role in key child rights developments.

The NGO Group works through its secretariat and thematic working groups to fulfil its mission to facilitate the promotion, implementation and monitoring of the CRC. Its main activities include:

- Supporting national and international NGOs and the Committee on the Rights of the Child to monitor and implement the CRC and its Optional Protocols;
- Developing legal instruments on child rights (including the new Optional Protocol to the CRC on a communications procedure);
- Strengthening the capacity of national child rights NGOs and coalitions;
- Producing practical tools
- Mainstreaming child rights in the broader human rights system.

The NGO Group also holds special ECOSOC consultative status at the UN.

Its strategic objectives are to:

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

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Cover photograph:

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Six-year-old Nemanja Brkic (left) sits with classmates in their nursery school in Novi Sad, capital of Vojvodina Province. Nemanja was born with hearing problems. His nursery school is one of the first to accept children with disabilities as part of a new law integrating children with disabilities into mainstream schools. Nemanja is the only child in his class with special needs, and, with therapy, he is able to keep up with his classmates. The law is meant to reduce the placement of children with disabilities in institutions.

Under Article 23 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, States recognize that children with disabilities "*should enjoy a full and decent life in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate the child's active participation in the community*", and also that assistance shall be provided to ensure a child with a disability "*receives education...in a manner conducive to the child's achieving the fullest possible social integration and individual development, including his or her cultural and spiritual development*".



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PREFACE

Making Child Rights a reality: campaigning together for the new Optional Protocol



2011 witnessed a landmark development with the potential to advance significantly the realization of the rights of the child and international justice more broadly. On 19 December, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted a third Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). This will establish an individual complaints procedure to the Committee on the Rights of the Child for victims of violations of the Convention. The CRC had been almost alone among the principal UN human rights treaties in lacking such a procedure. The specious claim advanced by opponents that children lacked the competency to vindicate their rights, or that their capacity to access international justice would be likely to lead to their exploitation, has now been laid to rest.

The GA's action followed the Human Rights Council's adoption of the Optional Protocol (OP) in June, after nearly two years of deliberation by a Working Group of States established to elaborate the Protocol. But the efforts to achieve the OP were not driven exclusively, or even predominately, by States. Non-Governmental Organizations, aided by the deft leadership and coordination of the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child, played a critical advocacy role: both forging the momentum to begin drafting a Protocol, and ensuring that its content was fit for purpose. The effective mobilization by the NGO Group of a global civil society constituency; the production of useful information materials; and its critical engagement with the Chairperson of the Working Group and diplomatic delegations in Geneva and State capitals were all instrumental to the success of the OP.

NGO advocacy efforts did not result in a perfect OP, with States removing the possibility of accepting collective complaints during the final day of the negotiations on the protocol text. However, the instrument that emerged contains the essential elements to allow child victims who have been denied an effective remedy at home to have their rights claims addressed in an international forum.

The International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) worked in close collaboration with the NGO Group throughout the process. I can say that the work of the NGO Group was absolutely instrumental to the effectiveness of our own advocacy efforts. The ICJ called on the assistance of the NGO Group when it hosted an expert consultation in 2010 with the Office of the High Commissioner of Human Rights to enable the Committee of the Rights of the Child and others to adopt positions on the OP.

For the ICJ, the capacity of victims of child rights violations to gain access to justice and a remedy constitutes an indispensable block of the universal human rights architecture consisting in standards and mechanisms that began in the 1940s with the establishment of the first Human Rights Commission and the elaboration of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Critical to this project is the universal recognition and implementation of the Rule of Law principle that legal rights require effective legal remedies for their vindication, and that for a remedy to be effective it must be accessible to all rights holders. The Optional Protocol, when it comes into force, will certainly make a significant contribution towards achieving the UDHR promise of universal realization of human rights.



Ian Seiderman

Legal and Policy Director, International Commission of Jurists



Introduction from the President

Dear colleagues and friends of the NGO Group



It is with pleasure that I look back at 2011! It was a year with many successes to celebrate for the NGO Group and for the advancements of children's rights.

On December 19th the UN General Assembly adopted by consensus the 3rd Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. All the countries of the world, with no exception, agreed that children, like adults, have the right to appeal to an international mechanism when their rights are violated and when they have no access to justice at national level. This is an unprecedented progress, a watershed in the history of child rights. It is a big step towards addressing the impunity which often surrounds the violations of child rights and asserting that children – like adults – are rights holders. The NGO Group played a pivotal role in the campaign, coordinating a coalition of NGOs since 2008 and collaborating closely with States, UN agencies and Ombudspersons. We now call on all States to make their commitment to children real by ratifying the new Protocol as soon as possible.

I'm also proud to announce that the UN granted ECOSOC Status to the NGO Group in July. The consultative status will allow us to become an even stronger voice for children and to promote and defend their rights before all the UN bodies. It also puts us on an equal footing with other organizations and partners and in a position of negotiating with more strength and renewed passion.

2011 has been a very prolific year. The secretariat produced many tools to support member

organizations, national coalitions on child rights and children themselves to better influence the UN mechanisms to implement child rights. These tools include: *Together with children. A guide for NGOs accompanying children in reporting*, *My pocket guide to CRC reporting* for children and adolescents; the *Advocacy Toolkit for the Optional Protocol on a Communication Procedure*, and a series of factsheets on the Universal Periodic Review.

We also provided support and technical assistance to national NGOs and coalitions reporting to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. 198 national representatives participated in the Sessions and Pre-sessions of the Committee, including 8 children. This remains one of the core functions of the NGO Group, one that registers our excellence and commitment to increasing the effectiveness of the CRC for the years to come. In 2011, we also began researching good practices by our members and partners in advocating for the implementation of the Committee's concluding observations. The outcome of our research and resulting practical tools for national NGOs in following up concluding observations will be made available in 2012 with the view of making these recommendations a more powerful tool for change.

I'd like to thank the secretariat for their hard work and my colleagues of the Executive Committee for their dedication to children and their rights. Sincere thanks also go out to our donors and partners who share our passion for children, their rights and dignity. We look forward to continuing working with you all in the years to come.

Roberta Cecchetti
President



1. Maximizing engagement of NGOs with the Committee on the Rights of the Child

From the outside, and particularly from a distance, the UN human rights system can seem daunting and inaccessible. On the issue of child rights, the NGO Group works to de-mystify the processes involved and to make the system more accessible to national child rights NGOs and coalitions in particular. The NGO Group actively supports national NGOs and coalitions to engage with the Committee on the Rights of the Child (the Committee) at all stages of the reporting cycle for the CRC, OPAC and OPSC, including the preparation

Influencing fast-changing countries: supporting NGOs from the Middle East and North Africa

The Arab Spring coincided with the Committee's reviews of Bahrain, Egypt and the Syrian Arab Republic. In the course of the countries' reviews, the Committee acknowledged the significance of the historical events taking place and its capacity to address some of the resulting child rights violations, as well as influence the future path of policy and law makers in these countries. The Committee stressed that the responsibility to respect, protect and fulfil children's rights is an obligation of the States and should not be deviated from in the name of national security.

Taking into account the possible fear of reprisals, the NGO Group provided technical assistance and logistical support to NGO representatives from Egypt and the Syrian Arab Republic at the private Pre-session, and for all three countries at the public Sessions. Those who participated shared evidence-based information with the Committee about the impact of protests and violence on children, as well as the root causes and on-going challenges faced by their States in implementing the CRC and its Optional Protocols.

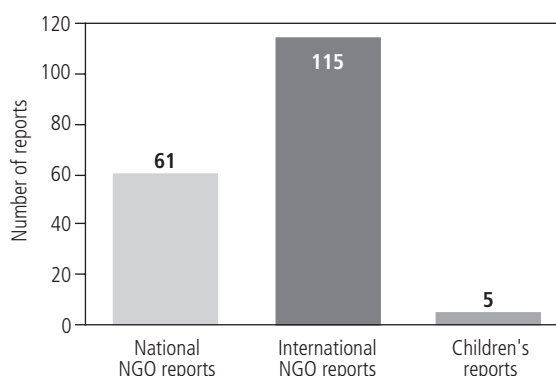
"On this exciting journey [the NGO Group was] offering professional support and reassurance and jumping over and side-tracking the hurdles, hand in hand together with us right through the process. We felt we were better prepared than the Government delegation."

National Children's Council, Seychelles

of an alternative report; meeting with the Committee during the pre-sessional working group (pre-session); observing the public session; and actively participating in follow-up to concluding observations.

The NGO Group reaches out to national NGOs and coalitions to tell them about the opportunities to engage with the Committee through the alternative reporting process. We provide technical assistance and share information and tools on reporting, demonstrating to national NGO partners how their participation in the reporting process, together with the work of the Committee at the international level, can be mutually reinforcing and ultimately serve to advance the child rights agenda at the national level. Through their direct access to the Committee, national NGOs and coalitions help the Committee better understand the national context and challenges. Based on this

Alternative reports from national and international NGOs and children



information, the Committee develops concrete recommendations that serve as a basis for the advancement of child rights in the State under review.

In 2011, the Committee reviewed 51 State reports from 37 countries at its Sessions or Pre-sessions. Reporting under the CRC : Afghanistan, Australia, Algeria, Azerbaijan, Bahrain, Belarus, Cambodia, Cook Islands, Costa Rica, Cuba, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Egypt, Finland, Greece, Iceland, Italy, Lao PDR, Madagascar, Myanmar, New Zealand, Niue Islands, Panama, Republic of Korea, Seychelles, Singapore, Syrian Arab Republic, Thailand, Togo, Turkey, Ukraine and Vietnam

Reporting under the OPAC: Australia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Greece, Mexico, Thailand and Ukraine.

Reporting under the OPSC: Australia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Mexico, Nepal, Sweden, Thailand and Togo.

The NGO Group also provides support to NGOs where State reports have been received, and who are due to report in the next three years. Coalitions currently in correspondence for reviews in 2012–2014: Albania, Armenia, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burkina Faso, Canada, China, France, Georgia, Germany, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Jamaica, Kazakhstan, Ireland, Liberia, Lithuania, Malaysia, Malta, Namibia, the Netherlands, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Rwanda, Slovakia, USA and Uzbekistan.

To complement the State reports and help to ensure the Committee's fuller understanding of each country's particular challenges, the NGO Group facilitated the transmission of 181 reports from NGOs in the 37 countries under review, to the Committee. The NGO Group also supported the submission of 5 children's reports.

To facilitate NGO engagement with the Committee, the NGO Group provides financial and

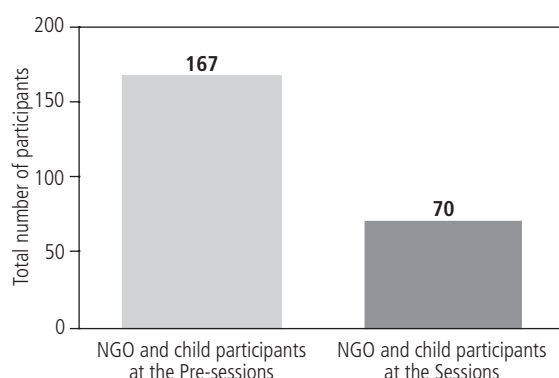
Mapping of Child Rights NGOs

In 2011, the NGO Group initiated a centralized database of contact information of NGOs and coalitions working in the field of child rights all over the world. By mapping our contacts, we can identify regions where more outreach and capacity building is needed, and use the contacts already established to build the capacity of less engaged partners, by sharing examples of best practice from neighbouring countries. This mapping will also be a basis for developing a vast resource of examples of best practices for the advancement of child rights in different countries.

logistical support to national actors as a priority. We assist NGOs to maximize the opportunity to participate in the pre-session by facilitating their input and managing their participation, allowing NGOs to focus on providing their expertise effectively.

The NGO Group supported 237 NGO participants from 33 of the 37 countries being reviewed at the sessions or pre-sessions. NGOs did not attend from Cuba, Cyprus, Niue and Singapore for the pre-session and/or session; however, alternative reports were received for all four, whether from national or international NGOs. Of the 237 participants, 55 were financed by the NGO Group and 8 were children. All participants received technical and logistical support during the preparation of their alternative reports, as well as for travel to Geneva and attendance at the Committee meetings according to their needs. In follow-up to the meetings, the NGO Group actively corresponded with all NGOs that submitted information to the Committee, including those that participated in meetings, to disseminate Lists of Issues, Written Replies and Concluding Observations. These form the basis for delivering further information to the Committee and as a valuable advocacy tool at the national level.

NGO participants at the Sessions and Pre-sessions



STRENGTHENING THE REPORTING ON THE OPTIONAL PROTOCOLS

Since launching *Reporting on OPAC and OPSC: A Guide for Non-governmental Organizations*, the publication has been disseminated widely in English, French and Spanish. In the past, many NGO reports focused on the issues most often associated with the two Protocols: the recruitment of

children into armed forces for OPAC; and child trafficking and sexual exploitation in the case of OPSC. The NGO Group publication has helped NGOs working on OPAC- and OPSC-related issues, to report on the broad range issues captured in both protocols.

In 2011, the Committee examined reports on OPAC from Australia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Democratic Republic of Congo, Egypt, Greece, Mexico, Thailand and Ukraine. To encourage NGOs to report on OPAC even if their country was not directly involved in an armed conflict, the NGO Group shared its guide and alerted NGOs to the broad range of child rights issues that go beyond direct involvement of children in an armed conflict. As a result of this outreach, the Committee received information on OPAC for Australia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Greece and Ukraine. Under



Mr. Krishna Subedi,
Human Rights Treaty
Monitoring Coordination
Committee Nepal

the OPSC, 12 NGO reports were reviewed from Australia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Mexico, Nepal, Sweden, Thailand and Togo, with significant improvement in the range of information shared with the Committee.

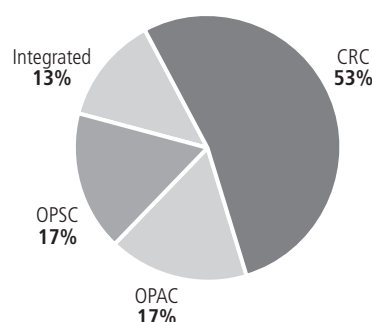
"The [Forum of the NGO Group] was very fruitful. Also, the meeting was effective in preparing the questions to UN CRC Committee. The pre-session meeting was a great success by your support."

**CRC Subcommittee Secretariat, Human Rights Treaty
Monitoring Coordination Committee Nepal, OPSC**

Working towards an integrated approach

Going forward, many States will submit integrated reports on the CRC and the Optional Protocols. This year already, seven of the States reviewed by the Committee had submitted integrated reports. The NGO Group has been actively identifying integrated reports and encouraging national NGOs and coalitions to report on all three treaties where relevant to give each one specific attention in their alternative reports. As such, we actively seek out opportunities to support the participation of protocol-specific NGO participants at the relevant meetings to ensure that the Committee continues to receive comprehensive information relevant to all the treaties being reviewed.

State reports reviewed by the Committee in 2011 under each Treaty



Understanding the challenges in following up the concluding observations

One of the biggest challenges in the reporting process is the implementation of the Committee's concluding observations. Unlike the preparation of alternative reports, there is no clear role for national child rights NGOs and coalitions to follow-up the concluding observations, as they are addressed to the State. However, NGOs have an important role to play in advocating, monitoring and supporting the State in fulfilling its obligations.

Given our role in the reporting process, national NGOs and coalitions often ask the NGO Group for guidance in following up the concluding observations. While the NGO Group includes modules on follow-up in training workshops and NGO Forums, it does not have practical tools to guide NGOs through the follow-up stage. In order to identify the main challenges and to find out what would be the most useful for national NGOs, the NGO Group began conducting research on the follow-up to concluding observations in 2011. The first phase of the research was based on a survey and identified the social, political and economic context in which NGOs operate and looked at ways to address challenges within their operational climate. Our research has shown that NGOs often lack the capacity to translate that knowledge into follow-up activities that will actually bring about implementation of the CRC and its Optional Protocols, and that they would benefit from opportunities to learn how NGOs in other countries have successfully followed up the concluding observations. Based on these findings, the second phase of the research will focus on developing case studies of best practices in follow-up and producing a tool to provide guidance to NGOs on how to use the concluding observa-

The eyes of the world on the CRC

While the Committee's Sessions reviewing how States are respecting children's rights are public meetings, only a few privileged NGO and UN representatives attend the meeting in Geneva. Although the NGO Group brings, and often pays for, representatives from national child rights coalitions to attend these meetings, this part of the reporting process remains inaccessible to many national NGOs, children and other stakeholders.

Together with NGOs working closely with other treaty bodies, the NGO Group has advocated for the webcasting of all treaty body Sessions for some time. In 2011, the NGO Group helped InCRC, an NGO from the Republic of Korea, to webcast three State reviews during the 58th Session in September. NGOs and other stakeholders benefited from watching the governments of Panama, Republic of Korea and Syrian Arab Republic being examined by the Committee. Subsequently, national NGOs used the archived videos to raise awareness about the reporting process, and as part of on-going dialogue and relationship building with governments to follow-up on their reviews.

tions as a catalyst to move the child rights agenda forward at the national level.

WORKING CLOSELY WITH THE COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Ensuring a close and effective working relationship with the Committee is central to the NGO Group's work on the CRC reporting process and finding new ways to strengthen child rights. With a third of the Committee changing following the elections in December 2010, the NGO Group held a reception to thank the departing members with whom we had worked closely for many years and a working dinner to welcome the new members. This continued dialogue facilitates our on-going support for the Committee's activities and advocacy for child rights. In 2011, the main activities and meetings with the Committee included:

Developing working relations with new members

As part of their induction to the work of the Committee, the NGO Group presented information on the alternative reporting process and the role of the NGO Group in supporting their work. Given the growing number of child-led organizations participating also explained how children participate in reporting and the more child-friendly format of the meetings between children and Committee members.

Supporting the Committee in developing its working methods

Two meetings, in February and June, were held between the Committee, its Secretariat and the NGO Group's Secretariat and Executive Committee. As well as close consultation on the campaign for the new Optional Protocol, the February meeting focussed on ways to further enhance cooperation between the Committee and the NGO Group, while the June meeting addressed three other key priorities for the NGO Group: working methods on combined CRC/OP reports, General Comments and Days of General Discussion; child participation in CRC reporting, and mainstreaming child rights in the work of other Treaty Bodies and the Human Rights Council's Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

Collaborating with the Committee for the new Optional Protocol to the CRC on a communications procedure (OP)

In February, shortly before the second session of negotiations of the draft OP, the NGO Group met the Committee to discuss the process. Updating them on the latest changes made to the draft OP and the position of child rights NGOs, the NGO Group also shared its expectations and objectives for the forthcoming Session. In June, the NGO Group met again to discuss next steps, including the adoption of the draft OP by the General Assembly and their preliminary views on new rules of procedure.

Supporting the organization of the Day of General Discussion

The NGO Group's Working Group on Children of Incarcerated Parents supported the Committee throughout the development of the concept note, agenda, panellists and working groups. The NGO Group also developed the exhibition featuring a collection of children's testimonies of how paren-

tal incarceration has affected them, as well as examples of best practice, from around the world (please see the section below for more details).

Providing input to General Comments

The NGO Group closely followed the development of the General Comments on the protection from all forms of violence, the best interests of the child, health, the right to play, and business and child rights. Our activities included commenting on and disseminating drafts to NGOs, proposing possible strategies for external consultations, and participating in consultations or expert meetings. The NGO Group also kept interested NGO partners around the world updated on the elaboration of General Comments, a process that is closely followed by many as they are keen to have the Committee's expertise on how provisions of the CRC can be more fully implemented on the ground.

Making children of incarcerated parents visible at the Committee's Day of General Discussion

On 30 September 2011, the Committee held the first international event on children of incarcerated parents. This Day of General Discussion addressed this often neglected issue and highlighted the rights and needs of children whose parents are in detention. By looking at how criminal and administrative justice systems can better respect those children's rights and account for their needs, the NGO Group's thematic Working Group on Children of Incarcerated Parents¹ actively supported the Committee in preparing for the Day of General Discussion. It helped to develop the underlying concepts for the Day, and arranged for different professional backgrounds and cross-regional representation among speakers and participants. Almost 300 participants, including academics, States, children and NGOs took part in the day.

The workshops captured how all stakeholders, including different levels of government, as well as civil society organizations, prison facilities, schools and other service pro-

"The exhibition is very powerful, it made me think about issues which I never thought about before."

(Diplomat representing EU State Party)



The developers of the Collateral Convicts exhibition, Roisín and Natalia from the NGO Group and Aisha from the working group on children of incarcerated parents stand beside their display.

viders, could better meet the needs of children with incarcerated parents. A final outcome report will be available on the website of the Committee in early 2012.

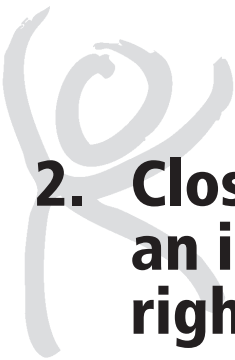
Alongside the Day of General Discussion event itself, the Working Group designed and printed an exhibition on children of incarcerated parents (see below).

Collateral convicts: an exhibition about children of incarcerated parents

This year, the NGO Group managed the design and creation of the 'Collateral Convicts: if my parents go to prison what happens to me?' exhibition that complemented the Day of General Discussion. Displayed in the UN Palais des Nations from 19 to 30 September, the exhibition was sponsored by the Permanent Mission of Austria to the UN in Geneva. Featuring a series of ten panels, the exhibition included drawings and quotes by children from across the world and highlighted initiatives at community and national levels that seek to address some of the needs, and promote the rights, of children whose parents are incarcerated. Located in one of the main gathering points

at the UN's offices in Geneva, the exhibition caught the attention of governments, UN agencies and civil society representatives about this often neglected or even unknown issue.

¹ The Working Group was created in 2010 to coordinate NGO input in this event. It is convened by QUNO and BICE and includes members as well as the NGO Group secretariat.



2. Closing the gap: the creation of an international remedy for child rights violations

“Children will now be able to join the ranks of other rights-holders who are empowered to bring their complaints about human rights violations before an international body [...] We see every day examples of a wide range of human rights violations against children – from discrimination to child trafficking to all forms of physical or mental violence. I encourage States to sign this Optional Protocol to give child victims of such violations direct access to an international human rights complaints mechanism.”

UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Navi Pillay, after the adoption of the Optional Protocol to the CRC on a Communications Procedure by the UN General Assembly (20 December 2011)

2011 was a historic year for child rights. Through the adoption of the new Optional Protocol to the CRC on a Communications Procedure (OP) on 19 December, the international community has put child rights on an equal footing with other human rights and recognized that children too, have the right to appeal to an international mechanism specific to their rights.

Adoption of a new international complaints mechanism for child rights violations

The NGO Group Secretariat intensified its support of the OP Working Group for the final stages of the drafting process and the adoption of the new Optional Protocol. Throughout the process, the NGO Group mobilized and coordinated the campaign with other actors such as National Human Rights Institutions through their International Coordinating Committee (ICC), disability rights NGOs, and an increasing number of national and regional child rights NGOs in Africa, Asia and Latin America.

To ensure that the new OP would provide the best possible outcome for children, the NGO Group constantly adapted its strategy to anticipate or respond to new developments in the drafting process.

Getting the best possible draft Optional Protocol

In preparation for the second round of negotiations of the Open-ended Working Group on an Optional Protocol to the CRC (10–16 February), the OP Working Group drafted a joint NGO submission in response to the revised draft Optional Protocol, as an official submission to the drafting process. The submission expressed the child rights NGO's position on key provisions such as collective complaints; covering the CRC, OPAC and OPSC; and allowing children to submit complaints directly or through a representative of their choice. To reach out to States and other partners from across the regions, the NGO Group translated the submission into French, Spanish and Arabic.

The NGO Group Secretariat continued to coordinate the advocacy for the key provisions amongst its members and partners, targeted States through their missions in Geneva and in capital, including, Austria, Belgium, Canada, Denmark, Egypt, Finland, France, Germany, Honduras, Japan, Lebanon, Kenya, the Republic of Korea, Norway, Peru, Senegal, South Africa, Spain, Sweden, Turkey, Uganda and the United Kingdom, and as well as through regional fora such as MERCOSUR and the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights.

The OP Working Group and its partners actively participated in the second round of negotiations. Oral statements were made under each item discussed and State delegations were lobbied throughout the negotiations. These intense advocacy and lobbying activities contributed to

ensuring that key provisions – such as the possibility for a child victim or his/her representative to submit a complaint regardless of national legal capacity or legal representation requirements, a full scope of application of the communications procedure² and a time-bound procedure – were kept in the Optional Protocol. Other achievements included: provisions allowing the Committee to interpret the OP in a child sensitive manner through its rules of procedure, the possibility for the Committee to follow-up on the implementation of a friendly settlement agreement³ and the obligation for States to disseminate the OP in accessible formats to adults and children. However, the most innovative provision for a collective complaints provision was eventually removed, despite the strong NGO lobby.

Mobilizing NGOs worldwide to strengthen the international campaign

As part of its strategy, the NGO Group Secretariat continued to coordinate the activities of the OP Working Group and partners to ensure effective advocacy in their countries and regions and conducted specific advocacy missions in the countries or regions where members of the Working Group and partners were less present.

Encouraging Africa to share its best practice

Africa has the only regional complaints mechanism specific to child rights for the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC). As this also includes a provision on collective communications, the NGO Group focused on mobilizing African child rights actors and States to lobby for the new OP to include a similar provision.

The NGO Group therefore participated in the *Regional Workshop on Advocacy and Complaints Mechanisms to the ACERWC* (Kenya, 18–20 January), which was organized by the Children's Legal Action Network. The workshop focused on

advocacy on the rights of the child in the region, especially communications to the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of Children (ACERWC). The workshop presented the new OP and how African NGOs could engage in it. It also provided the opportunity to meet with – and lobby for more support from – members of the ACERWC, national NGOs and coalitions, academics and representatives of Kenya's Ministry of Justice and the Department of Children Services. This helped raise awareness among African child rights NGOs about the campaign and strengthened their engagement in the campaign. The NGO Group also coordinated the drafting and delivery of an oral statement before the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights on the OP Campaign.

Raising awareness and planning the next steps in Asia

As the region with the largest child population and no regional human rights complaints mechanism, Asia was an important focus of the campaign. In addition to advocating for the new OP

with partners and States, the NGO Group also participated in a roundtable discussion on the OP (August, Thailand). This was organized by Child Rights Coalition Asia (CRC Asia), a regional network of South-East Asian children's rights and human rights organizations, in collaboration with Save the Children which gathered NGOs from Cambodia, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, the Philippines, Singapore, Thai-

land, Timor Leste and Vietnam. The NGO Group provided input into the agenda, presented the OP campaign and the key provisions of the final draft OP. It assisted in setting up workshops to brainstorm about strategies and activities in support of the new OP in South-East Asia according to three themes: 1) children's participation, 2) the ratification campaign in Asia, and 3) how to engage the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in advocacy around the OP. These discussions led to draft strategies for CRC Asia's engagement in the OPCRC campaign and reinforced their commitment to participate in the campaign. Subsequent to this, CRC Asia actively engaged in the campaign, including by sending letters to the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and NHRIs in Thailand,

"Thank you for the quality information and documents (press release, draft letters for the ratification campaign). The NGO Group does an excellent job, which is essential to help us keep our ECPAT groups informed about the new OP and get them involved in lobbying their respective governments to sign/ratify the new treaty."

François Souchet, ECPAT

² The new OP will automatically cover all the instruments the State party has ratified among the CRC, the OPSC and the OPAC.

³ This is a significant innovation which does not exist in similar mechanisms.

Learning from the OPICESCR ratification campaign

In order to capitalize on the experience of the NGO campaign for the ratification of the OP for a communications procedure for the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (OPICESCR), we worked with ESCR-Net, which is coordinating that campaign. The lessons they learnt fed into the development of the NGO Group's strategy for the CRC OP ratification campaign and our exchange opened other areas of collaboration, including potential partnerships with regard to strategic litigation/legal assistance for the OP.

Indonesia, Philippines and Cambodia and to the embassies of ASEAN countries in Manila, and the permanent missions of ASEAN countries in New York calling for their support for the adoption of the OPCRC. They also put the adoption of OP on the agenda of ASEAN bodies (especially the ASEAN Commission on Women and Children). As a result, the Human Rights Commission of the Philippines included a reference to the OP in their UPR submission. They are planning to organize a regional pledge of support for the ratification of the OP in 2012.

Getting a new international treaty: advocacy for the adoption of the new OP in New York

The NGO Group Secretariat travelled to New York in May and October for the OP. The first series

of meetings focused on assessing the best strategy for the new OP's adoption by the UN General Assembly, establishing working relationships with States, NGOs and UN agencies based in New York. To that end, the NGO Group met with the diplomatic missions to the UN of key member States, to ensure their support for the adoption of the new OP by the Third Committee and the General Assembly. The NGO Group also met with several NGOs to update them on the process and discuss the next steps of the campaign and the strategy for the adoption of the final draft by the Third Committee and General Assembly in New York. As a result of these meetings, the NGO Group refined its strategy for the adoption of the new OP by the Third Committee and GA and laid the foundations for the second set of New York advocacy meetings in October. During this second visit, the NGO Group held informal meetings with key UN missions to ensure that there was no last-minute concern or issue that would have jeopardized the adoption of the final draft Protocol by the Third Committee and the General Assembly.

Making the new instrument known to the world

To raise awareness about this new international treaty offering children the opportunity to seek redress and remedies for violations of their rights, the NGO Group Secretariat coordinated the preparation of a joint NGO press release in English, French, Spanish, Italian, Dutch, Arabic and Russian as well as a joint public statement in English, French, Spanish and Italian. International media, such as BBC World News, and national media (including in Canada, India, Norway, Sweden and the United States of America) reported on it.

3. Supporting children to advocate for their rights

Children are increasingly participating in processes to monitor or implement their rights. In recent years, the NGO Group has been involved in discussing – and at times facilitating – child participation in the CRC reporting process, international events (the 20th anniversary of the CRC or the World Congress III on the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents, for example), Days Of General Discussion, General Comments and more recently the UPR and the new OP for a Communications Procedure.

At the heart of the NGO Group's work on child participation is ensuring that children participate in a meaningful and effective way in relevant international processes. In 2011, the NGO Group focused on developing its child participation expertise, supporting children to engage in CRC reporting, conducting research, producing tools for children and NGOs and providing training on child participation in the reporting process.

Children's views matter: new guidelines to help children report on their rights

To respond to the requests of children and NGOs for practical advice on reporting on the CRC, the NGO Group launched its new guides for child participation in September. These guides not only aim to strengthen the participation of children in the reporting process, but also ensure that the Committee can deepen its understanding of the main problems children confront when reporting, and receive solutions from the children's perspective.

My Pocket Guide to CRC Reporting is the new guide geared towards child-led organizations. It provides practical advice, case

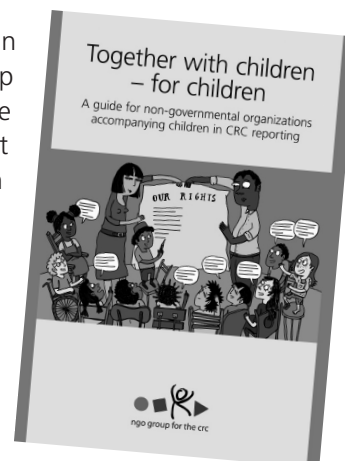
studies and information on the reporting process and the role children can play in this process in a child-friendly format. As children are usually

supported by adult-run NGOs, the NGO Group also produced a guide for those NGOs that accompany children in the reporting process. It is entitled *Together with children – for children: A guide for non-governmental organizations accompanying children in CRC reporting*.

Both guides, which were produced in English, French and Spanish, were disseminated to the national coalitions, child-led organizations, International NGOs and other relevant partners to ensure that children are increasingly involved in the reporting process in a meaningful and effective way.

Face to face with the Committee: helping children prepare for their meetings

In addition to preparing their own reports or having their views integrated in an NGO alternative report, children are increasingly meeting with the Committee directly to provide their perspective and recommendations on the fuller implementation of their rights. Most children who meet with the Committee participate in a children's meeting and/or in the Pre-session. The format of children's meetings is less formal and children participate enthusiastically; making presentations to the Committee and answering questions on behalf of the child-led organizations that they have been selected to represent. Meanwhile, other NGOs organize Rapporteur visits for one or more Committee members, as it provides Committee members with the possibility to meet children in their own environment, understand the main issues affecting them and provide more time for a much bigger group of children to share their concerns. In order to better prepare children for these meet-



ings, the NGO Group developed a child-friendly oral briefing for children coming to Geneva. These briefings are increasingly being conducted a few days before the meeting and if possible in a conference call, to enable children to ask questions about what to expect and to provide more time for them to better prepare themselves for the meetings.

In 2011, eight children and adolescents came to Geneva to meet directly with the Committee. They were from Australia, Cambodia, Costa Rica, Republic of Korea and Thailand. The NGO Group accompanies the children during the 1-hour children's meetings to ensure that they understand the process, are introduced to Committee members and feel at ease to present the perspective of children in their country to the Committee. In some cases, we also help with translation, as there are no translation services during these meetings.

Developing the expertise of the NGO Group Secretariat in child participation

The NGO Group has a well-established role in CRC reporting and international child rights events and processes. Because of this, and the growing participation of children, member organizations, national coalitions and other partners look to the NGO Group for expertise on how to appropriately facilitate child participation in all these different settings.

"To be listened to, to be taken seriously and treated like a real person is incredibly empowering, and that's what our meeting felt like."

Adolescent girl, Australia

In order to further develop its experience of best practice, new tools and how to assess which types of child participation are the most appropriate in different international fora, the NGO Group conducted new research and took part in a training workshop on child participation in 2011. The research focused on best practice for child participation in the reporting process based on existing literature, lessons learnt from past events and interviews of child participation experts, and children

themselves. To complement existing research on child participation in the reporting process, the NGO Group focused on reviewing and analysing children's reports in order to assess two main areas: firstly the reasons for children's engagement in the reporting process and the methodology for engagement and/or mobilizing children in the reporting process; and secondly the structure and contents of children's reports and recommendations for future children's reports. In addition, the NGO Group Secretariat and members of its Executive Committee took part in a training workshop by a child participation expert which was tailored to the NGO Group's work at international level. Following this training and research, the NGO Group will develop a child participation strategy for its own activities as well as guidance for partners for future involvement of children in all these settings.

4. Using the wider UN human rights system for child rights

In line with its priority of *mainstreaming child rights in relevant activities of other UN human rights mechanisms and procedures*, the NGO Group developed a strategy for 2012–2014 to mainstream child rights into the work of the HRC, UPR, Special Procedures Mandate Holders and other Treaty Bodies and in UN bodies in New York. The NGO Groups' strategy aims to ensure that key human rights processes include a child rights perspective and that child rights NGOs with relevant expertise are involved in these processes.

Given its role as a civil society platform, the NGO Group enjoys a unique overview of child rights NGOs engagement in these processes and can ensure these actions are coordinated, complementary and add value to the UN system. The NGO Group focused on four key areas in 2011: collaborating with human rights NGOs in relation to the HRC review; co-organizing the HRC annual day on the rights of the child; facilitating the participation of NGOs in UPR; and taking part in consultations to strengthen the treaty body system. In addition, the NGO Group responded to opportunities or priorities which emerged in Geneva and New York. These included monitoring and advocating for changes in HRC and UN Third Committee resolutions and establishing contacts with other treaty bodies (the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the Convention against Torture, for example).

In order to make these opportunities more accessible to national child rights NGOs, the NGO Group also developed a tool to help child rights NGOs identify existing opportunities to engage with UN bodies. It also gave a webinar on the role of NGOs in the promotion and monitoring of child rights as part of Human Rights Education Associates' child rights programming course for West African NGOs (May).

Child Rights Focus at the Human Rights Council

The HRC's Annual Day on the Rights of the Child (9 March 2011) was dedicated to discussing a



Roisin (NGO Group) assists a child from Benin with translation, to facilitate her participation in Plan International's side event at the Human Rights Council.

From the street to the Human Rights Council

As part of its objective to bring national child rights defenders to speak at the HRC, the NGO Group supported the participation of Marco Antonio Da Silva, Director of the Project *Meninos y Meninas da Rua* (Brazil), as a panelist. Having survived "the violence, repression and street trafficking" himself and given his work with children in street situations (Brazil), Mr. Da Silva explained the stigma and serious violations of these children's rights, such as labour and/or sexual exploitation, abuse, mistreatment, torture and even death. Mr. Da Silva emphasized that the issues affecting children living or working in the street demonstrate the importance of looking at the complex reality facing these children. Focusing only on one particular aspect can lead to policies which are "fragmented, weakly connected ... and poorly resourced."¹ In order to address these issues, he made practical recommendations in relation to developing a holistic approach, including building solid child protection and family support policies, instead of having to deal with the current consequences poverty, discrimination and the absence of community-based support.

holistic approach for the protection and promotion of the rights of children working and/or living on the street. The Annual Day focused on raising awareness that all countries are affected by the phenomenon of children living or working on the street, the specific vulnerability of girls (including teenage pregnancy, for example), the negative trend to criminalize children on the street and the need for increased participation of children in addressing the issue.

As with previous annual days, the NGO Group was one of the organizers of the panel, together with States, UN agencies and another NGO. In collaboration with the Consortium for Street Children, the NGO Group coordinated the input of other NGOs, ensuring that the agenda covered the most pressing or problematic issues, and that the panellists were experts from around the world and with different backgrounds, including direct work with the children living or working in the street.

In addition to this targeted input, the NGO Group co-sponsored several NGO statements, participated in and covered child-related side events, and monitored child references in other items of the HRC. Over 50 States took the floor, either to present their achievements or ask for information on best practice.

Making child rights violations visible in selected HRC resolutions

In addition to the annual HRC resolution on the rights of the child, the NGO Group also carried out advocacy and lobbying activities to mainstream child rights in other HRC resolutions relevant to child rights. These included providing input on the resolution on Violence against Women to take into account the children of women victims of violence (June), and ensuring that the cases of torture and killing of child protesters are referred to in the resolution resulting from the Special Session on the situation of human Rights in the Syrian Arab Republic (August).¹ Furthermore, the NGO Group continued to follow the Advisory Committee session to monitor their work from a child rights perspective, especially in relation to the report on human rights and traditional values (August).

Providing tailored support to NGOs reporting on UPR

As the first cycle of UPR came to an end in 2011, the NGO Group simultaneously worked on finalizing its practical tools on the UPR (i.e. fact sheets), providing on-going advice and support to national NGOs who were taking part in the last sessions of this cycle, and exploring ways to strengthen their engagement for the next cycle (starting May 2012).

The assistance provided to national and international NGOs included providing advice on advocacy strategies and comments on their submissions and recommendations, putting them in touch with the missions of member States to the UN in Geneva, as well as providing advice for the follow-up and how this could be linked to CRC reporting. Assistance was systematically adapted to the needs of each organization. The NGOs which received support on

"Thank you very much for helping us improve our report. Your inputs made it a lot easier for us to make our submission compliant and our report much more concise."

Convenor of the Philippines NGO Coalition on the UNCRC

UPR included child rights coalitions or NGOs from Algeria, Pakistan, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Timor Leste and Togo as well as War Child Holland for Sierra Leone.

From theory to practice: Training NGO networks to use the Universal Periodic Review for child rights

Having developed a training module on UPR in 2010, the NGO Group continued to provide training on this complementary mechanism to CRC reporting in its NGO Forums, and where relevant, at national and regional events.

As a follow-up to the training workshop (December 2010) for ECPAT International, an NGO working to end child prostitution, child pornography and trafficking for sexual exploitation, the NGO Group helped them to design their in-house UPR training programme (May 2011) for their network in 70 countries. As a result, ECPAT International ran training in four regions (in 2011); East Asia and Pacific, the Americas, Europe and Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) and Africa, and provided technical assistance to its national groups for the drafting of UPR submissions on Brazil, India, Indonesia, the Netherlands, the Philippines, Poland and South Africa.

The NGO Group also participated in a regional workshop on *Engaging with the UN Human Rights Council and the Universal Periodic Review* (22–25

August in Thailand), which was organized by the Child Rights Coalition Asia⁴ (CRC Asia) in collaboration with Save the Children Sweden. During the workshop, which gathered 30 participants from Cambodia, China, Hong Kong, Indonesia, Malaysia, Myanmar, Singapore, Thailand, the Philippines, Timor Leste and Vietnam, the NGO Group shared the lessons learnt by, and best practice of child rights NGOs active in the UPR. It also provided detailed advice on how to raise child rights issues successfully in the UPR. After the workshop, specific support was provided to the participants of the Philippines and Timor Leste to assist them with their UPR submission and advocacy.

Helping make best practice the standard practice across the UN system: treaty body strengthening

Since the adoption of the Dublin Statement in 2009, the Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and other partners have consulted stakeholders on how the UN treaty body system should be strengthened and streamlined. The NGO Group has continued to discuss the topic, both among the NGOs working throughout the treaty body system, as well as through joint action at the Inter-Committee meetings.

The NGO Group was invited to a consultation hosted by the National Human Rights Commission of Korea (April, Republic of Korea), for OHCHR to consult international NGOs that work closely with UN treaty bodies. Since only a limited number of NGOs were invited, the NGO Group organized a meeting with partner NGOs, to share information about the event and to get their views on agenda items of the meeting, so that their views could be represented by participants. The discussions focused on: strengthening NGO reporting; enhancing the constructive dialogue between treaty bodies and States, as well as States' cooperation with civil society; and finally the impact and level of follow-up to the reporting process. Having worked with the Committee on the Rights of the Child since its inception, the NGO Group promoted the Committee's best practice in how it engages with civil society in the reporting process. As this Committee has some of the best practices in this area, the NGO Group emphasized that any streamlining and strengthening should not compromise these high standards.

The Seoul Statement, a series of recommendations agreed upon by the participants, was draft-

Monitoring child rights developments at the UN General Assembly

In addition to its lobbying for the adoption of the new Optional Protocol for a Communications Procedure in New York, the NGO Group monitored the developments of a resolution on strengthening collaboration on child protection within the UN system, which risked undermining the independence and mandates of UN child rights experts. The NGO Group produced a position paper, which was circulated to all UN missions in New York. It also carried out advocacy activities to ensure that the resolution did not weaken the current system in collaboration with other NGOs. As a result, the final resolution did not include any of the controversial provisions criticized by civil society.

ed during the meeting. Further to discussions in Seoul, the NGO Group took the lead on drafting the final version of the document, which was adopted by consensus by all NGO participants, and was widely endorsed by a range of other organizations around the world. On the basis of this statement, the NGO Group spoke at the Inter-Committee meeting in June, with particular reference to how the treaty body system could be more accessible to children and to national organizations and raise their awareness about the processes, for example by supporting the call for concrete steps to be taken towards webcasting treaty body sessions. All consultations with NGOs and other stakeholders held in 2011 will feed into the High Commissioner's final report (2012) which will chart the way forward for the strengthening of the treaty body system.

Including a child rights perspective to individual communications procedures

As part of the discussion on Treaty Body strengthening, the NGO Group contributed to the joint NGO statement on *Strengthening the Treaty Body Individual Communications Procedures* which was submitted to a meeting of academics (Luzern, 24–25 October) and the Treaty Body meeting on individual communications in Geneva (29 October). While the new OP to the CRC for a Communications Procedure had not yet been adopted, it was important to ensure that issues related to children were taken into account in this

⁴ This regional network was created in 2008 to mainstream children's rights in ASEAN and international processes.

joint statement in anticipation of the development of the rules of procedure for the new OP and that these new standards be used by other treaty bodies when receiving and examining communications concerning children. The statement was included in the body of documents contributing to the Dublin II meeting on Strengthening the United Nations Human Rights Treaty Body System in November.

5. Capacity Building: Making the UN Human Rights system more accessible to child rights actors

The work of the UN human rights system, including the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the HRC and UPR can seem impenetrable and far removed from the reality of working with children at the grassroots level. By conducting in-country training, the NGO Group brings the international system closer to home and makes the complex processes and mechanisms comprehensible for national NGOs. As a result, the importance of the international system as a leverage to advance the national child rights agenda is increasingly valued and used by child rights NGOs.

In 2011, the NGO Group participated in regional and national training workshops and organized three NGO Forums in Geneva, reaching national NGOs from 62 countries from around the world.

The NGO Group focuses on regions where there is nascent or limited engagement of child rights NGOs in advocacy and monitoring activities. We provide child rights NGOs and coalitions with the necessary knowledge and tools to influence the work of the UN human rights system and put their child rights concerns on the international agenda.

In 2011, the NGO Group focused on providing training on effectively monitoring and implementing the CRC and its two Optional Protocols; facilitating meaningful child participation in the reporting process; the follow-up to concluding observations; the new communications procedure of the CRC; and engaging in UPR. The NGO Group's priority is to reach out to a large number of partners, especially if they are about to report on the CRC or UPR. It responds to requests from national and regional partners to participate in capacity building training workshops. The NGO Group tailors its training to respond to the needs of participants on a case-by-case basis.

'Save the Children Sweden, Regional Office for Middle East and North Africa (MENA) was very grateful to receive the support of the NGO Group ... the outcome of the workshop was that Manara members developed national action plans to follow up the State report submission for the committee of the UNCRC and prepare for the Alternative Reports in their countries.'

**Sanna Johnson, Regional Director
Save the Children Sweden,
Middle East and North Africa**



Children present their experience in CRC reporting during an NGO Forum.

Empowering NGOs in the Middle East and North Africa to engage in CRC reporting

With few national child rights networks and no regional coalition, as well as limited or no reporting from some countries, the Middle East and

North Africa (MENA) is a target region for our capacity building activities. The NGO Group responded to a request from the Manara Project⁵ to receive training on how to engage in the CRC reporting process.

The workshop was organized by Save the Children MENA Regional Office (Amman, April 2011). As a result of the workshop, participants gained information on how they could take part in reporting to the Committee. Since the workshop, the

NGO Group has been in regular contact with participants from States due for reporting in the near

⁵ The Manara Project was started by the Save the Children MENA Regional Office in 2009, with participant NGOs from Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, the Occupied Palestinian Territories and Yemen, and has most recently grown to include Algeria, Egypt and Tunisia. The purpose of this project is to increase the capacity of child rights NGOs to work effectively as advocates at the national, regional and international levels.



CRC Reporting training with MANARA project members in Amman.

future. These NGOs have also shared the information they gained with other national child rights NGOs.

Contributing to WarChild's International Strategic Planning Meeting in Sierra Leone

When the NGO Group cannot be physically present at meetings due to competing commitments, it provides input from a distance. For example we provided technical input into WarChild's International Strategic Planning meeting, giving pre-recorded presentations on CRC and OPAC reporting as well as UPR, fielding questions from Sierra Leone live by email from Geneva. This enabled representatives from all WarChild country programme offices from Afghanistan, Burundi, Colombia, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Israel/OPT, Lebanon, Sierra Leone, Sri Lanka, North Sudan, South Sudan, Uganda – as well as head office and regional office representatives from the Netherlands, Canada and the UK to understand how to engage with the alternative reporting mechanisms of the Committee and the UPR. Presentations focused on how WarChild could integrate CRC and UPR reporting into their work to increase the visibility of issues related to children in armed conflict at the international level. The NGO Group's input enabled participants to understand how they could contribute to the

"The NGO Group prompted us to reflect deeply on various aspects and concerns pertaining to children's 'representation' and 'voice' in CRC reporting...The presence of the NGO Group was very helpful as it provided us a great (and rare) opportunity to make clarifications regarding the CRC reporting process and gain some insights into all the rigorous work that takes place 'behind the curtains', to build a rapport with the Group and for requesting for assistance and guidance for the future work of our coalition related to CRC periodical reporting."

NGO Coalition, Sri Lanka

adoption of more context-specific recommendations being made, providing a useful advocacy and activity planning tool to support the way forward for improving the situation of children involved in armed conflict at the national level.

Impacting Policy on Children with Intellectual Disabilities in Europe

Held in October and hosted in Brussels by Euro-child, Inclusion Europe and Charles University (Prague), the conference focused on the situation of children with intellectual disabilities in 22 European countries, and launched the, 'Children's Rights for All' report. The NGO Group presented the CRC alternative reporting process and advised NGOs on how to communicate with the Committee, and the challenges being faced by European States in the implementation of the CRC relative to children with intellectual disabilities. As a result, participants better understood how to raise the issues related to children with intellectual disabilities in the international forum that the Committee provides and to link that process to the national level and to advance the child rights agenda in general – and for children with intellectual disabilities in particular. By engaging with a group of NGOs that focuses on a particular group of children, the NGO Group contributed to discussions on how thematically focused NGOs can engage with broader national structures to share experiences and speak jointly to promote and advocate in different fora.

Meaningful Child Participation in CRC Monitoring

Building on the 2010 Nepal regional workshop on NGO reporting, the NGO Group co-facilitated a second regional workshop in Cambodia (November 2011) for Plan International country offices and national child rights coalitions. 41 NGO representatives took part from Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor Leste and Vietnam. The NGO Group actively developed the concept of the workshop and its agenda. The main objective was to further develop



Representing their respective youth organizations, children from Cambodia and India participate in a PLAN regional workshop on child participation in CRC reporting.

civil society capacities to facilitate meaningful child participation in child rights monitoring. This included planning sessions with participants to identify forthcoming opportunities both CRC and UPR reporting. Asia is a strategic region for the NGO Group to build child participation, as child-led organizations and activists have been involved in reporting about their rights in some way in the region for many years. The participants were therefore in a position to discuss some of their best practices and lessons learnt from their experiences.

Participants gained a better understanding of how to help ensure child participation that is fair, meaningful and interesting for children and which feeds into the work of the Committee. The NGO Group also gave input on how in-country child participation activities can be linked to the alternative reporting process, as part of on-going monitoring of child rights at the national level.

Coalition building in Luxembourg

In order to enhance their effective engagement with the Committee and create a strong, on-going child rights monitoring process at the national level, the NGO Group presented to a national workshop of Luxembourgish child rights NGOs in December. The workshop was also attended by the National Child Rights Ombudsperson, and an adult representative of the National Youth Council.

Focussing on the practical implications of engaging in the CRC alternative reporting pro-

cess, child participation in the preparation of reports, and data collection for the forthcoming State review in 2013, participants gained valuable information about how to achieve their goal of producing an alternative report. At the end of the workshop, the NGOs expressed their intention to use the CRC alternative reporting cycle as a basis for their work in monitoring the situation of children's rights in Luxembourg.

Children share their experience at the October NGO Forum

To strengthen the work of national child rights coalitions at national and international level, the NGO Group organizes NGO Forums during each of the pre-sessions for visiting NGO and child representatives. These meetings provide a platform for these national actors to exchange best practices in some of the most challenging areas of work, such as child participation and follow-up

to concluding observations, as well as to find out about other human rights mechanisms such as UPR or the new OP for a communications procedure.

The forums in February, June and October were attended by 93 NGO representatives from the Republic of Korea, Finland, the Czech Republic, Costa Rica and Cambodia, Azerbaijan, Greece, Italy, Madagascar, Myanmar, Panama, Seychelles, Togo, Democratic Republic of Con-

go, Australia, Algeria, Cook Islands, Thailand, Turkey, Viet Nam and Nepal, as well as 6 child representatives from Australia, Cambodia, Costa Rica and Thailand.

In addition to inviting guest speakers (e.g. from UPR-info, SOS Children's Villages and World Vision International), the Forums provide a space for national child rights actors to share their experiences. For instance, participants from Costa Rica, Cambodia and the Republic of Korea presented their follow-up strategies and the challenges they faced, while children from Australia presented the process they had taken part in to prepare a report for the Committee.

As a result of these Forums, national actors got more involved in UPR and the campaign for the new OP as well as starting to prepare themselves for the follow-up to the concluding observations of the Committee.

"The child friendly guide and the NGO manual on reporting are resource materials which encourage us to enhance the child participation in the CRC monitoring and reporting. It has given us a feeling of working on child rights in a team globally not in isolation. It was really great to have you in the workshop."

NGO Coalition, Nepal



6. Campaigns and activities of thematic working groups

The NGO Group has a number of Working Groups comprised of members acting together on specific child rights issues. In addition to the activities of the Working Group on the new Optional Protocol and the Working Group on Children of Incarcerated Parents, the activities of the other thematic working groups are as follows:

Violence against Children

The Working Group continued its support of the UN Secretary General's Special Representative on Violence against Children (SRSG-VAC) Marta Santos Pais. It provided advice and guidance on selecting countries for field missions, consolidated statements referring to violence against children made by Special Rapporteurs, and contributed to the Global Progress Survey on Violence against Children 2011. In these ways, the Working Group supported the work of Secretary General's special representative and strengthened the linkages between her and the work of the Special Rapporteurs (including through a statement on 'violence against children in education' at the HRC). It also helped to assess progress and set future priorities in the implementation of the UN Study recommendations.

The Working Group also helped to prepare the HRC's annual day on children working and or living on the streets and its related resolution. Furthermore Working Group members submitted written statements, and an oral statement in relation to the presentation of the report of the SRSG on violence against children. The Working Group co-sponsored various side events, which included the collaboration with other international NGOs.

In its campaign for the universal ratification of the two Optional Protocols to the CRC, members of the Working Group lobbied Permanent Missions in Geneva and continues to explore ways to influence other States, to sign and/or ratify these treaties.

Indigenous Children

In 2011, the Working Group on Indigenous Children welcomed Emma Sydenham and Dawn

Wallam, from the Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care, Australia as the new Convenors. During this time, the Working Group has focussed on developing its strategy and working plans for the coming years.

Human Rights Council

The activities of the Working Group and how these complement the activities of the NGO Group secretariat, were the subject of discussion and revision. These changes in emphasis were discussed and decided upon in a final meeting in early December. The Working Group will focus on three areas of work: co-ordinating the advocacy with the diplomatic Missions in Geneva for the UPR, establishing an ad-hoc thematic sub-group to focus on the theme of the annual day on the rights of the child, and supporting the mainstreaming activities and objectives of the NGO Group Secretariat. The final proposal for these changes will be presented to the General Assembly for approval in March 2012.

Children without Parental Care

During 2011 the Working Group on Children without Parental Care focussed on two key activities. Firstly a consultancy was established to begin discussions on defining the forms of care as listed in the UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children (the Guidelines). An initial paper was drafted by an external child rights specialist and then sent for comments through various networks including the membership of the Working Group and the Better Care Network. This call resulted in over 40 submissions. As a result, a draft 'definitions' paper was prepared for further discussion in 2012. The end of the year brought together members of the Working Group to take forward plans for the development of an Implementation and Monitoring Handbook (the IMH) for the Guidelines. The IMH will be a particular focus of work for completion in 2012.



7. Tools and Publications

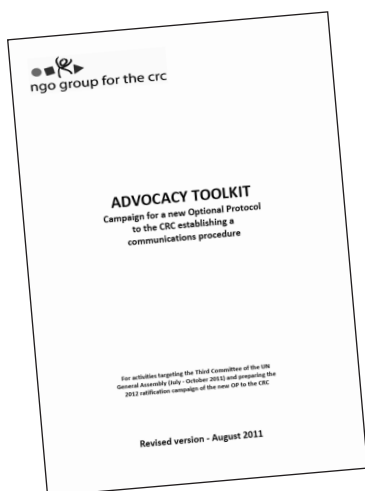
In 2011, the NGO Group produced or updated tools for national and international NGOs as well as launching its first child-friendly guide. These tools covered all our areas of work, including on the CRC reporting process, child participation, UPR and the new OP for a communications procedure. In addition, the NGO Group prepared its usual country reports and session reports as well as its e-newsletter Grouptalk.

Making it easier for children to participate in the CRC reporting process

In September, the NGO Group launched its two guides for children and NGOs which support children in reporting to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. The guides were disseminated to national coalitions and child-led organizations to provide practical advice and information on how children can effectively and meaningfully participate in CRC reporting. Further information on the guides can be found in the section on child participation of this report.

Timely tools for the campaign for the OP for a communications procedure

As part of its campaign to mobilize support for the new Optional Protocol, the NGO Group updated its advocacy toolkit, which contained background information on the campaign, on the drafting and adoption process, a factsheet explaining the key provisions of the new OP as well as advocacy tips and template letters for NGOs to carry out their own advocacy campaigns to mobilize support across the regions. The

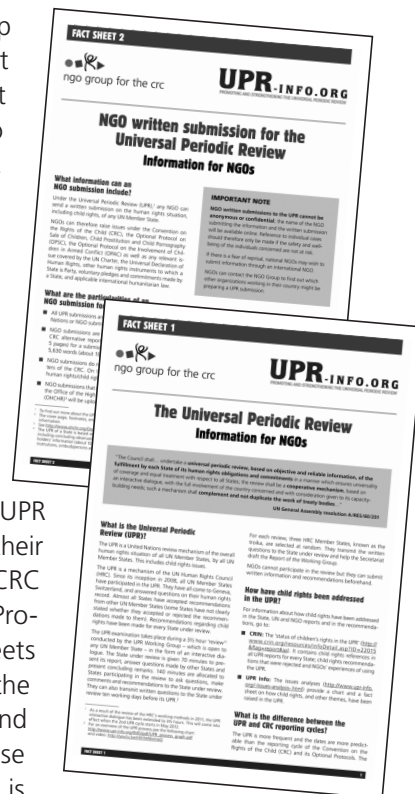


NGO Group also coordinated and prepared the NGO joint submission in response to the revised draft OPCRC circulated by the Chairperson of the OEWS in January, background information for States and other supporters about key provisions and other relevant tools in various languages.

Ensuring NGOs receive up-to-date information on UPR in 2012

The NGO Group revised its fact sheets on UPR at the end of 2011 to take into account the new developments resulting from the HRC review, which will be applicable for the second cycle of UPR in 2012.

To ensure that child rights NGOs and coalitions use UPR to complement their reporting on the CRC and its Optional Protocols, the fact sheets focus on linking the two processes and how NGOs can use them. The UPR is especially useful if States have not reported to the Committee for many years, as it provides NGOs with another way to make recommendations on child rights. The fact sheets, which were produced in collaboration with UPR-Info, an NGO which is the reference for UPR, cover the UPR process, the NGO written submission, and advocacy. The fact sheets are available in English, French and Spanish on the NGO Group website. As the 2nd cycle of the UPR will be critical to take stock of the best practices and lessons learnt for follow-up, UPR-Info and the NGO Group decided to postpone the



launch of the last fact sheet until the end of 2012 in order to include new developments.

Keeping NGOs informed about new child rights developments

The NGO Group reported on all the States under review during the 56th, 57th and 58th sessions of the Committee. In total, 28 country reports were prepared on the CRC, OPSC and OPAC and sent to the national NGOs from the countries under review as well as circulated through GroupTalk and CRINMAILS. These reports are especially important for NGOs which were unable to travel due to a fear of reprisals or for financial reasons.

To bring new developments in child rights to the broader human rights community, the NGO Group wrote articles for the International Service for Human Rights' *Human Rights Monitor Quarterly*. In addition to providing an analysis of the

sessions, the NGO Group provided information on the OPSC, OPAC, the outcome of the Committee elections, the backlog of reports, general comments, the day of general discussion and the new Optional Protocol for a communications procedure.

Sharing news with the network through GroupTalk

Readership of the NGO Group's quarterly newsletter continued to grow strongly, with circulation increasing by 34% and copies read by 30%. This wider readership reflects the value of insightful articles provided by members, and the convenience of having a wide array of new child rights information from our members in one place. GroupTalk was redesigned in the summer, and now provides even more convenient navigation, enriched content and a more readable style.

8. Organizational development

Expert speakers at the General Assembly

On March 11, the NGO Group held its General Assembly, in which Africa was the guest of honour. The meeting opened with a very informative presentation by Benyam Mezmur, member of the African Committee of Experts, on the background



Benyam Mezmur addresses the General Assembly

of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and the workings of its Committee of Experts.

Mr Mezmur's presentation focused on the distinct nature of the African treaty, the challenges faced in monitoring its implementation despite its progressive spirit, its high ratification rate, its civil society back-up and its existing communications procedure. In the afternoon, Yehualashet Mekonen, of the African Child Policy Forum, presented their new report *'How Committed are African Governments to Budgeting for Children?'.*

Executive Committee elections

Elections for the Executive Committee were also held at the General Assembly. Two out-going members of the Executive Committee were candidates for re-election: Anne-Sophie Lois and Ivanka

Shalapatova. The President presented them to the assembly, thanking them both for their time and commitment during their appointments. The vote to keep Anne-Sophie Lois and Ivanka Shalapatova on the Executive Committee was carried unanimously.

New members join the NGO Group

The General Assembly also admitted three NGOs as new members: DCI Costa Rica, Together Scotland, and the Alliance for Children of Mauritius. We give a warm welcome to all three new members, and note that in joining the NGO Group, the Alliance for Children of Mauritius will also enhance African representation within the constituency of the organization.

The NGO Group gains ECOSOC Status

In July, the NGO Group was awarded special consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council ('ECOSOC Special Consultative Status'). This is a significant achievement, as it formalises the NGO Group's long standing working relations with United Nations bodies. In awarding this status, the United Nations recognizes the NGO Group's special competencies in child rights, and the desire to work more closely with the NGO Group through the Economic and Social Council and its subsidiary bodies. In practice, ECOSOC status provides access to a wide range of UN process, for example the right to participate in many conferences, and gives the NGO Group

the authority to speak at UN meeting. This strengthens our ability to engage and promote child rights with the UN.

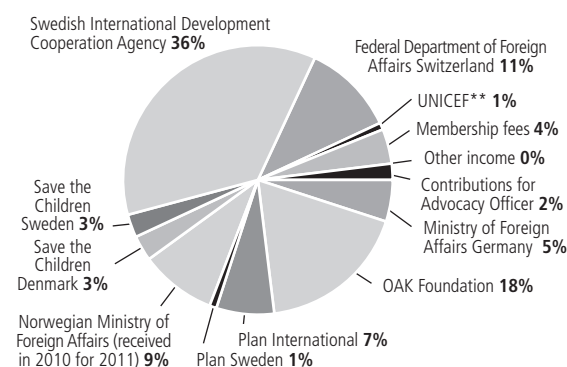


Members of the NGO Group at the General Assembly

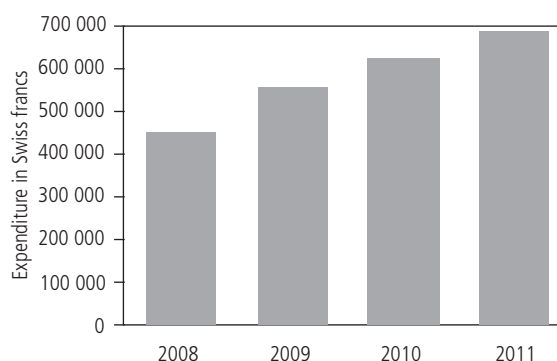
9. Accounts and funding

Funding partners and members extended their financial support of the work of the NGO Group in 2011. Thanks to their continued and strengthening commitment, total income increased by 8% compared to 2010. This enabled the NGO Group to increase the scale of its work and its impact for child rights. The NGO Group sincerely thanks all of its donors for their support.

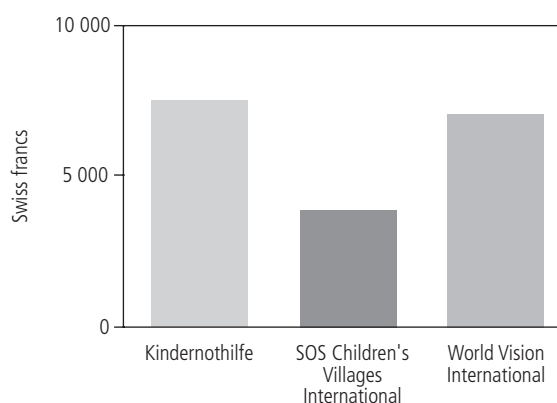
2011 Sources of funding



NGO Group expenditure, 2008–2011



Funding in 2011 for the Advocacy Officer Position from member organizations of the Working Group for the CRC Optional Protocol



2011 expenditures of the NGO Group

	Contributions for Advocacy Officer	Ministry of Foreign Affairs Germany	OAK Foundation	Plan International	Plan Sweden	Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs (received in 2010 for 2011)	Save the Children, Denmark	Save the Children, Sweden	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency	Federal Department of Foreign Affairs Switzerland	UNICEF**	Membership Fees	Other Income	TOTAL
ACTIVITIES														
NGO participation in CRC/OPs reporting and training		32,642	7,514			61,636			9,401	2,400	5,760			119,352
Children's guidelines & child participation research			3,350		10,000				22,141	13,000				48,491
Paper on follow up to COs			4,500											4,500
Revised NGO Guide to Reporting			4,500						1,500	1,000				7,000
Campaign for OP on Communications Procedure, training, tools, publications		3,560	6,407	1,992					2,362	2,000				16,321
Personnel & social charges	18,480		96,763	54,001		3,320	24,504	20,207	144,603	42,900				404,778
Annual Report									2,323	400				2,723
CORE COSTS														
Rent & office operational costs & staff development									34,905	9,000				43,905
Professional service fees (accountant, auditor etc)									13,545	3,100				16,645
ExCo, GA & Working Groups' meetings & activities									7,810	4,500				12,310
Computer & website development and maintenance									5,617	1,700				7,317
Total expenditure per donor in 2011	18,480	36,202	123,034	55,993	10,000	64,956	24,504	20,207	244,207	80,000	5,760	—	—	683,342
Total donor income for 2011	18,480	36,201	130,995	55,993	10,000	64,954	24,504	20,207	266,138	80,000	5,760	27,341	1,966	742,540
Income allocated to reserves*												27,341	1,966	29,307
Income earmarked for 2012			7,961						21,931					29,892
TOTAL DONOR INCOME	18,480	36,202	130,995	55,993	10,000	64,956	24,504	20,207	266,138	80,000	5,760	27,341	1,966	742,541

* Subject to GA approval, ** 354CHF for disbursement in 2012.



10. Organizational Structure and Governance

The most senior organ of the NGO Group is the **General Assembly**, which meets annually, and is comprised of the member organizations of the network. The **Executive Committee**, accountable to the General Assembly, provides strategic support, guidance, and oversight of the work of the NGO Group and Secretariat. The latter is responsible for carrying out the daily work of the network, especially in relation to reporting on the CRC and its Optional Protocols and mainstreaming child rights.

To advance child rights within the international human rights system, NGO Group members come together in thematic Working Groups to work on a particular child rights theme or issue.

In 2011, the Secretariat and Executive Committee consisted of:

Secretariat Staff

Lisa Myers – Coordinator
Roisín Fegan – Child Rights Officer
Muriel Dreifuss Bisson – Administrative Officer
Anita Goh – Advocacy Officer
Tim Fieldsend – Fundraising and Communications Officer

Short-term staff and freelance consultants

Sabine Casenave (Accounting consultant)
Alain Gross (Information Communication Technology consultant)
Catherine Bauman
Laura Theytaz Bergman
Robin Spencer
Séverine Jacomy-Vité (interim Coordinator from February to June 2011)
Maria Pia Bianchetti

Interns & Volunteers

Dagny Broome
Jill Sutherland
Lelde Ilzina
Natalia Starkowicz
Nicole Bürli
Radoslava Karabasheva
Robin Spencer
Tatenda Makanza

Executive Committee

Ms. Roberta Cecchetti – President
Save the Children International

Mr. Peter Newell – Vice-President
APPROACH Ltd.

Mr. Alan Kikuchi-White – Treasurer
SOS Children's Villages International

Ms. Anne-Sophie Lois – Secretary
Plan International

Mr. Lennart Reinius
Save the Children Sweden

Ms. Ivanka Shalapatova
International Foster Care Organisation

Ms. Veronica Yates
Child Rights Information Network

Working Groups of the NGO Group

Working Group on Children without Parental Care

Working Group on the Human Rights Council
Working Group against the Sexual Exploitation of Children

Working Group for a Communications Procedure

Working Group on Violence against Children

Working Group on Children of Incarcerated Parents

Working Group on Indigenous Children



11. Membership

1. 3D Three: Trade, Human Rights, Equitable Economy
2. Action for Children and Youth Aotearoa (ACYA)
3. African Child Policy Forum (ACPF)
4. Alliance for Children Mauritius
5. Anti-Slavery International
6. APPROACH -Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children
7. Arigatou International
8. Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW)
9. Association of Networks for Community Empowerment (ANCE)
10. Association of Rural Development and Action Research (ARDAR)
11. Baha'i International Community
12. Child Helpline International
13. Child Rights Network Switzerland (Netzwerk Kinderrechte Schweiz)
14. Children's Rights Alliance – Ireland
15. Children's Rights Alliance for England (CRAE)
16. Child Rights Information Network (CRIN)
17. Christian Children's Fund Inc (CCFUSA)
18. Coalition Against Trafficking in Women International (CATW)
19. Consortium for Street Children
20. Defence for Children International (DCI)
21. Defence for Children International Costa Rica
22. DevCon
23. ECPAT International
24. Egyption Fondation for the Advancement of Childhood Conditions
25. Education International
26. Eurochild
27. European Association for Children in Hospital (EACH)
28. EveryChild
29. Fédération Internationale des Communautés Educatives (FICE International)
30. First Nations Child and Family Caring society of Canada Incorporated (FNCFS)
31. Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC (QUNO))/ Quaker UN Office
32. Fundacion Privada Intervida
33. Human Rights Watch (HRW)
34. International Falcom Movement-SEI
35. Inter African Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women (IAC-HTPS)
36. International Alliance of Women (IAW)
37. International Association of Youth and Family Judges and Magistrates (IAYFJM)
38. International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN / GIFA)
39. International Catholic Child Bureau (BICE)
40. International Council of Jewish Women (ICJW)
41. International Council of Women (ICW/CIF)
42. International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW)
43. International Foster Care Organisation (IFCO)
44. International Inner Wheel
45. International Institute for Child Rights and Development

46. International Movement "ATD Fourth World"
47. International Play Association (IPA)
48. International School Psychology Association (ISPA)
49. International Social Service (ISS/SSI)
50. La Voix de l'Enfant
51. Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
52. Plan International
53. Penal Reform International
54. Plataforma de Organizaciones de Infancia
55. Proyecto Solidario
56. Redlamyc
57. RELAF
58. Resources Aimed at the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (RAPCAN)
59. ROC (The "Right of the Child" NGO)
60. Roshni Homes Trust
61. Save the Children, Alliance
62. Secretariat of National Aboriginal and Islander Child Care (SNAICC)
63. Soroptimist International
64. SOS-Children's Villages International
65. Terre des Hommes International Federation (TdH)
66. Together Scotland
67. The National Coalition for the Implementation of the UNCRC in Germany
68. WAO – Afrique
69. War Child Holland
70. Werkstatt Ökonomie
71. Women's World Summit Foundation (WWSF)
72. World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA)
73. World Alliance of YMCAs
74. World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS)
75. World Jewish Congress (WJC)
76. World Movement of Mothers / Le Mouvement Mondial des Mères (WMM/MMM)
77. World Organisation Against Torture / SOS Torture (OMCT)
78. World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations
79. World Vision International (WVI)
80. Young Men's Christian association of Costa Rica/ Asociacion Cristiana de Jovenes



12. Thanks

The NGO Group relies on the financial support of its donors and partners to deliver its programmes. We are grateful to the following donors for their support in 2011:

Governments

Germany
Norway
Sweden
Switzerland

Foundations

OAK Foundation

United Nations Bodies

UNICEF

NGO Group Members and OP Working Group Members

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

Participating in the production and editing of this report

Tim Fieldsend
Lisa Myers

Concept and design

minimum graphics

Printing

Imprimerie Minute

The NGO Group envisions a world in which children's rights, as defined by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, are universally recognised and realised. With your support, we can help make this happen.

Donations can be made to the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child through:

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

Account No. 279 – 230010.01M
IBAN: CH55 0027 9279 2300 1001 M
BIC: UBSWCHZH80A

To find out more about how you can be a part of this vision, please contact:

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