

NGO Group for the Convention
on the Rights of the Child



Annual Report 2012

The NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child (The NGO Group)

Since our establishment in 1983 to influence the drafting of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the NGO Group has strived to connect international human rights mechanisms and processes to the daily realities of children.

We are an independent non-profit network of 79 national, regional and international organisations committed to ensuring that all children fully enjoy their rights as defined by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Based in Geneva, Switzerland, the NGO Group is a unique coordinating platform for NGO cooperation and action.

Working closely with civil society, State and UN actors, the NGO Group has played a central role in key child rights developments at international level. Our Secretariat is considered a leading expert on the work of the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

The NGO Group holds special ECOSOC consultative status at the United Nations.

Our work

Our approach is a strategic combination of empowering and building the capacity of civil society actors to effectively engage with the Committee on the Rights of the Child and other international human rights mechanisms and processes; actively participating in the drafting of international child rights instruments; advocating for child rights internationally, with a specific focus on the Human Rights Council and its Universal Periodic Review; supporting and monitoring the work of the Committee; and conducting research on evolving areas in child rights. By supporting national actors to engage with UN human rights mechanisms, we contribute to making these mechanisms more effective vehicles for change at national level.

Strategic priorities for 2010–2014

- 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 realisation 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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On the cover:

Children attend class at Bondoukou Elementary School, in the town of Bondoukou, Bondoukou Department, Zanzan Region.

In November 2011, Côte d'Ivoire continues to recover from the violence that erupted after the 28 November 2010 presidential election. Over 185,000 people are still displaced, while more than 163,000 Ivoirians remain refugees in nearby countries, mainly Liberia. In the north-eastern Zanzan Region, the conflict worsened an already precarious existence where poverty affects over half of the population and food insecurity remains prevalent. Over 40 per cent of children are chronically malnourished, while the region's rate of moderate acute malnutrition – 7.7 per cent – is the highest in the country. Over 30 per cent of the population lacks access to safe drinking water, while nearly 70 per cent lacks access to improved sanitation facilities. The region has a 16 per cent under-five mortality rate, exceeding the already high national figure. Regional primary school enrolment is a low 40 per cent and is even lower among girls. Further, approximately 60 per cent of the region's children do not possess a birth certificate, a basic requirement for accessing social services. In the context of a refocused equity approach, UNICEF, in coordination with the Government and other partners, continues to support efforts in health, including the treatment and prevention of HIV, nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene, education and child protection.

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PREFACE

Increasing State Accountability on Children's Rights through Alternative Reporting



Across the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, children continue to suffer violations of their basic rights. Though all of the States in the region have ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and shown willingness to work

towards improving the situations faced by children, progress has been slow. Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), thanks to their expertise and work with children, are key partners in the full realisation of children's rights. This is particularly true in the MENA region, where governments are frequently unable or unwilling to provide adequate basic services and protection. CSOs can also play a key role in advocating for increased state action, highlighting key areas of vulnerability, and, where States are unable to fulfil their obligations, directly providing and strengthening services.

For example, although Yemen was one of the first countries in the region to ratify the CRC in 1991 and to show willingness to work towards improving the situation of children, Yemeni people, both adults and children, are still unacquainted with the rights to be enjoyed by children. In order to realise a healthy environment for children, where they fully enjoy their rights, there is a need to raise awareness amongst adults and children about the rights guaranteed in the CRC and the obligations of the government to protect them. By fulfilling their obligations, governments are more likely to produce capable, productive, responsible, independent, and loyal citizens and future leaders.

To protect children's rights, NGOs and NGO coalitions play very important roles in monitoring and following up the implementation of the CRC both in Yemen and in other countries in the region. The capacity of these NGOs has developed through their experience in reporting on the CRC by preparing and submitting alternative reports to the UN Committee on the Rights of the

Child when their government was under review.

In Yemen, and across the MENA region, CSOs working on child rights face considerable challenges in their activities. They often work with limited or no resources from their governments. In the past, coordination and networking between CSOs had been minimal in the region. It is worth noting that there is no regional child rights network that spans the MENA region, and the region generally suffers from a serious lack of accurate data on the situation of children. This hinders programme delivery and advocacy – including the submission of alternative reports to the UN Committee – and may result in critical issues or groups of children being overlooked or poorly addressed.

As CSOs evolve, partially as a positive result of Arab Spring revolutions and donor support, internal and external accountability issues are starting to emerge. For a number of CSOs, rights-based approaches are increasingly being perceived as essential. Yet, even if this is a positive development, this evolution is not universal. Many NGOs and CSOs continue to suffer from limited resources and a lack of training. Training opportunities are often ad hoc and limited in scope.

To build the capacity of NGOs in the region, institutional and child rights-based thematic training activities have been provided by Save the Children through its regional project MANARA, with the technical assistance of the NGO Group, and through Child Rights Governance projects at national level. These trainings support networking and cooperation between NGOs. They also demonstrate the importance of CRC reporting and how it can be used in national-level advocacy.

In 2011 and 2012, in partnership and valued cooperation with the NGO Group, Save the Children partners in the MENA region have been able to understand and participate in the alternative reporting process. As a result of the partnership, which builds on outreach begun several years before, the NGO Group has provided capacity building trainings about CRC alternative reporting and understanding the system and the scope of the work of the Committee in Geneva to our part-

ner organisations from Yemen, Jordan, Morocco, Egypt, Iraq, Occupied Palestinian Territory, Tunisia, Algeria and Lebanon.

Beyond these trainings, the NGO Group provides technical and coordination support to NGOs from the region to facilitate their effective participation in the reporting process and discussions with the Committee in Geneva.

Recently Save the Children in Yemen strengthened child participation in the alternative reporting process through the Children's Parliament project, which was implemented by Democracy School, a local partner organisation. In 2009, with the support of the NGO Group, the Children's Parliament submitted an alternative report and met with the Committee in Geneva. In 2012, Children's Parliament prepared their second report, which they

plan to submit to the Committee in 2013. The report focuses on the consequences for children of the unrest experienced in the country since 2011.

Finally, I appreciate the support and efforts of the NGO Group team and members around the world to help the children realise their rights. I hope that they will continue to take the lead in capacity building for NGOs in the MENA region, especially looking forward to include other UN human rights mechanisms such as the Universal Periodic Review and Human Rights Council. These two bodies provide a good opportunity to highlight and advocate for the main issues and priorities facing children rights realisation in the region and I believe that the NGO Group has the capacity and knowledge to help MENA-based organisations to move forward effectively.

Abdullah A. Alkhamissy

Child Right Governance Advisor – Save the
Children International in Yemen

Advocacy focal point for Save the Children
Sweden regional project MANARA 2010–2012



Introduction by the President

Dear colleagues and friends of the NGO Group, I'd like to use this foreword to look through the global window that Geneva offers and reflect on the status of children's rights today. I will do so



by looking at two core elements of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC): its legal scope and the right of children to be listened to and to participate.

At the UN level, the participation of children still remains an ad-hoc process.

The NGO Group and its members have played a key role in ensuring spaces for the participation of children in UN Forums in Geneva, as well as diligent advocates for the creation of safeguards and conditions for such participation to be relevant, impactful and meaningful both for the children and the UN. Ensuring children's participation is a necessary requirement for them to exercise their right to be heard, their freedom of expression, thought and conscience, and their right to form their own associations (articles 12–15 of the CRC).

To facilitate child participation in UN processes, the NGO Group has developed guidelines for children to take part in the CRC reporting process; provided advice to children and accompanying NGOs coming to Geneva and supporting their participation in the CRC pre-sessions; as well as discussed child participation with the Committee on the Rights of the Child (the Committee). Thanks to the collaboration with members of the NGO Group, children also participated in and contributed to the Annual Day on the Rights of the Child at the Human Rights Council (HRC), the signing ceremony of the new Optional Protocol on a Communications Procedure (OP3 CRC) and the Committee's Day of General Discussion.

If children are to be recognised and treated as rights-holders, they must be able to claim and enjoy their rights, and have access to justice when their rights are violated. Despite it being central to the implementation of the CRC, States still have a

long way to go to ensure that children have access to justice and obtain remedies for breaches of their rights. To address this discrepancy, the NGO Group has been focusing on the ratification campaign for the new Optional Protocol on a Communications Procedure, which will give children the right to directly communicate with the Committee about violations not solved at national level. In 2012, the NGO Group created and co-led *Ratify OP3CRC: International Coalition for the OPCRC on a Communications Procedure*, campaigned for the ratification of this new treaty in most regions of the world and developed publications to mobilise national actors for the ratification campaign.

In 2012, two countries, Thailand and Gabon, ratified OP3 CRC and 35 States signed it. While this is encouraging, the process is too slow. Children should not have to wait to have access to justice and I sincerely hope that eight more countries will ratify this treaty in 2013, so that it can enter into force without delay.

In December 2012, nine Committee Members were elected. As the Committee can only be as strong as the people who represent it, the CRC elections were a priority for the NGO Group. We raised awareness about the elections, mobilised national NGOs to influence the selection process at national level and encouraged States to nominate and elect candidates with the most relevant expertise, experience and commitment to children's rights. We would like to thank the outgoing Committee members for their commitment and professionalism over the years and welcome the eight new ones. The NGO Group looks forward to continue supporting the Committee in its work to advance child rights throughout the world.

Finally, I'd like to thank our donors for their continued support in 2012. A special thanks also goes to my fellow colleagues on the NGO Group's Executive Committee and to the members of the Secretariat for their tireless efforts to make children's rights a reality.

Roberta Cecchetti

President
NGO Group for the CRC



1. Linking national child rights realities to the UN human rights system

For every child to fully enjoy his or her rights, all key stakeholders – including States, NGOs, National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) and children themselves – must be engaged. From a distance, United Nations (UN) processes and mechanisms, like the work of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (the Committee), may seem complicated, abstract and at times irrelevant to the work of national NGOs and the daily realities of children. Yet, reliable, first-hand information about the impact of State legislation, policies and programmes on the rights-holders – the children – enables expert bodies, like the Committee, to make concrete and relevant recommendations to States. These recommendations enable States to more fully guarantee the rights defined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (OPAC) and the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (OPSC).

In the field of child rights, the NGO Group works to de-mystify UN processes and mechanisms, by making them more accessible to NGOs and national child rights coalitions in particular, as well as to children. Through our comprehensive, relevant and timely information and assistance, these non-governmental actors contribute to the work of the Committee and ultimately to the children's fuller enjoyment of their rights.

MAXIMISING NATIONAL NGO ENGAGEMENT IN THE CRC REPORTING PROCESS

The NGO Group's active and on-going support at all stages of the reporting process for the CRC and its Optional Protocols (OPs) enables NGOs and national coalitions to more effectively engage with the Committee when their State is under review.

Through our comprehensive approach, we offer guidance to NGOs and national coalitions at the different stages of the reporting cycle. We alert them to the upcoming review of their State; explain how the reporting process works; provide technical assistance on how to prepare alternative reports and maximise the impact of their content; and share practical publications and comment on draft reports. We also give support and advice on assisting children in preparing their own information or reports. Throughout the process, we emphasise the link between this international process and national level advocacy to enable NGOs to optimise their investment of time and resources.

The NGO Group's logistical support for NGOs from all countries to attend meetings in Geneva includes arrangements for visa applications, travel and accommodation. Furthermore, we provide

technical support including briefings in preparation for meetings and assistance to NGOs during meetings with the Committee. Many NGO representatives, especially from national child rights coalitions, coming from countries in the Global South, as well as Central and Eastern Europe, receive NGO Group financial support to attend the Committee's pre-sessional working groups (pre-sessions) and sessions in Geneva for CRC, OPAC and OPSC.

Our assistance, which is tailored to the needs of the NGOs and coalitions, may also include training workshops (see page 10) for NGOs who are new to the process. The NGO Group facilitates the participation of invited NGOs, NHRIs and children in the Committee's private pre-sessions and in public sessions at the State review. We provide advice on follow-up to recommendations made by the Committee in the Concluding Observations. We also facilitate children's meetings between the Committee and child representatives (under 18), who participate in the preparation of a children's submission or in the NGO submission.

Through direct access to the Committee, national NGOs and coalitions help the Committee construct a more comprehensive picture of the realities faced by children in a particular country,

“ This was a really exciting process for us and also provided a platform that we could work from into the future. ”

KAIRANGI SAMUELA, COOK ISLANDS WOMEN'S COUNSELLING CENTRE

including the challenges and the measures that could be taken to address these challenges. By having a fuller picture of the situation, the Committee can make more concrete recommendations to advance child rights in the State under review.

During the 2012 sessions and pre-sessions, the Committee reviewed 59 reports from 37 States (see state list on the following page) under the CRC (22), CRC Integrated (8),¹ OPAC (13) and OPSC (16). To complement these State reports, the NGO Group facilitated the transmission of 158 alternative reports on every State reviewed from NGOs, coalitions and child-led organisations, to the Committee. Six of the reports were submitted by children from Albania, Canada, Turkey and Vietnam.

To optimise national NGO engagement with the Committee during the pre-sessions and sessions, the NGO Group provided logistical and technical support, and training, where relevant, to 134 NGO representatives from Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Armenia, Australia, Austria, Azerbaijan, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Burkina Faso, Canada, Cook Islands, Cyprus, Democratic Republic of Congo, Greece, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Israel, Liberia, Lithuania, Madagascar, Malta, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Paraguay, Philippines, Rwanda, Slovakia, Thailand, Togo, Turkey, United States, Uzbekistan and Vietnam, including 7 children from Albania and Canada.

In addition, the NGO Group provided financial support for travel and accommodation to 53 representatives from 31 countries: Albania, Algeria, Armenia, Australia,² Azerbaijan, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Burkina Faso, Cook Islands, Cyprus, Democratic Republic of Congo, Greece, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Israel, Liberia, Lithuania, Madagascar, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Paraguay, Philippines, Rwanda, Slovakia, Thailand, Togo, Turkey, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam.

The Committee currently has a backlog of 110 State reports, which means there is a significant delay between the time of the State report submission and the deadline for the submission of alternative reports. The NGO Group alerts national NGOs and coalitions as early as possible to

the fact that their State has submitted its report and helps them to capitalise on the delay as an opportunity to carry out consultations and gather accurate data, particularly with the participation of children, where possible. In preparation for the Committee sessions in 2013 and 2014, the NGO Group was in contact with national NGOs and coalitions in: Armenia, Bangladesh, Brazil, Cambodia, Central African Republic, Chile, China, Colombia, Croatia, Cuba, Dominican Republic, France, Gambia, Germany, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Honduras, Holy See, Hungary, Indonesia, India, Israel, Iraq, Jamaica, Jordan, Kuwait, Kyrgyzstan, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Mexico, Morocco, Nepal, Netherlands, Portugal, Republic of the Congo, Russian Federation, Rwanda, Singapore, Slovenia, Sweden, Switzerland, St. Lucia, Tanzania, Tuvalu, United Kingdom, Uruguay, Uzbekistan, Venezuela and Yemen.

Promoting the use of concluding observations to advance child rights at national level

While the reporting process is cyclical, the participation of NGOs has mostly focused on preparing alternative reports and meeting with the Committee, and to a lesser extent on follow-up to the concluding observations. Despite having produced an alternative report, met with the Committee and influenced the concluding observations, many national NGOs are not using the Committee's recommendations to their fullest.

“ Without the NGO Group and its invaluable service, many NGOs do not have the opportunity to engage in such an important process that enables governments and NGOs to work better together for advancement and implementation of UNCRC. ”



ADEM ARKADAS, CHILD RIGHTS POLICY AND ADVOCACY OFFICER, INTERNATIONAL CHILDREN'S CENTER, BILKENT UNIVERSITY

¹ Integrated reports cover both the CRC and one or more of the OPs.

² NGO Group financial support was provided to two Aboriginal women from Australia.

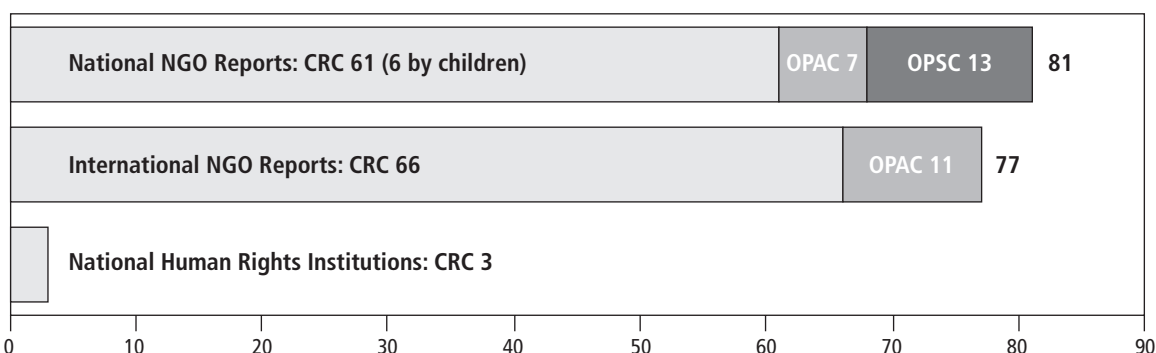
2012 NGO Group support for NGOs in the CRC Reporting Process

STATES REVIEWED IN THE PRE-SESSIONS AND SESSIONS:

CRC	OPAC	OPSC	Integrated (CRC)
Albania, Algeria, Andorra, Armenia, Australia, Azerbaijan, Cook Islands, Cyprus, Greece, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Liberia, Madagascar, Malta, Myanmar, Namibia Niue, Rwanda, Thailand, Togo, Uzbekistan	Albania, Armenia, Australia, Azerbaijan, Burkina Faso, Canada, Greece, Nepal, Paraguay, Philippines, Rwanda, Slovakia, Thailand, Togo, USA, Uzbekistan	Albania, Armenia, Australia, Azerbaijan, Burkina Faso, Dem. Republic of Congo, Greece, Paraguay, Rwanda, Slovakia, Thailand, USA, Uzbekistan	Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Canada, Israel, Lithuania, Slovenia, Turkey, Vietnam
22 reports	16 reports	13 reports	8 reports

In 2012, the Committee on the Rights of the Child reviewed 59 State Reports from 37 countries.

NUMBER OF ALTERNATIVE REPORTS TRANSMITTED BY THE NGO GROUP:



The NGO Group facilitated the transmission of reports for 95% of States reviewed.

NGO GROUP TECHNICAL, LOGISTICAL AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT

The NGO Group provided technical, logistical and financial support to NGO representatives to attend the Sessions or Pre-sessions in Geneva.

Number of representatives receiving technical and logistical support: 134 including 7 children



Number of NGO representatives receiving additional financial support: 53 NGO representatives



Countries where the NGO Group provided just logistical and technical support: Andorra, Austria, Canada, Malta and United States

Countries where the NGO Group provided financial support as well as logistical and technical support: Albania, Algeria, Armenia, Australia, Azerbaijan, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Burkina Faso, Cook Islands, Cyprus, Democratic Republic of Congo, Greece, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Guyana, Israel, Liberia, Lithuania, Madagascar, Myanmar, Namibia, Nepal, Paraguay, Philippines, Rwanda, Slovakia, Thailand, Togo, Turkey, Uzbekistan, and Vietnam.

Yet it is the follow-up to concluding observations which can ultimately have an impact on children.

To find out why NGOs are not as involved in follow-up activities, and to promote a cyclical approach to NGOs' engagement in the reporting process, the NGO Group began a new phase of its research on the follow-up to concluding observations in 2012. Having identified the main obstacles in 2011, which included limited information on follow-up activities conducted by NGOs, the new phase of the research focused on developing ten case studies on effective follow-up activities conducted by NGOs and NHRIs.

The NGO Group interviewed ten representatives from NGOs and NHRIs from different regions, working either at national or international level. These organisations had carried out a broad range of follow-up activities, ranging from developing indicators and conducting child-centric budgeting analyses, to organising seminars with government partners and other relevant stakeholders to chart a common plan to follow up on concluding observations. The outcome of the interviews was presented in ten practical and concise case studies (available in English, French and Spanish), covering the main activities, challenges and results of these follow-up activities. In addition to being available on our website, these case studies are used as part of our capacity building workshops. This type of knowledge sharing provides important insight into how to successfully use the outputs of expert bodies, like the Committee, to advance human rights at national level.

Because of the success of these case studies, ten new case studies were started at the end of 2012. They will be published in 2013.

INCREASING THE ACCESSIBILITY OF THE COMMITTEE'S SESSIONS

An essential step to empowering national actors to successfully advocate for change is ensuring that they can access the information that they need. While the work of the Committee in Geneva has the potential to have a big impact at national level, many people working on the



Child Rights Officer Roisin Fegan sets up the webcasting equipment to film the State Review of Andorra.

ground are unable to travel to Switzerland to attend the sessions. To reach out to these actors, the NGO Group works to make the Committee's reviews of every State, as well as other interesting events, accessible to those interested in child rights in all parts of the world.

Webcasting

At the core of our activities to make the Committee's work more accessible is the NGO Group's participation in a pilot project to webcast the sessions of all UN treaty bodies, offering live worldwide access to these important discussions on human rights. The pilot project, run by several Geneva-based NGOs, aimed to make the work of the treaty bodies more visible to the outside world and to demonstrate the benefit of webcasting treaty body discussions, with the aim of encouraging the UN to formally conduct the webcasting itself.

Over the course of the year, the NGO Group webcast the reviews of 21 States, which were publicly examined by the Committee, as well as the Day of General Discussion on *Children in the Context of International Migration* and the signing ceremony for the new Optional Protocol on a Communications Procedure. The NGO Group took care of all aspects of the webcasting from

“ **For children and youth to participate in decisions that affect their lives it is vital for global discussions about their rights to be made widely available. The live webcast of Canada's appearance before the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child was invaluable in making the proceedings known across Canada and in making the discussion accessible to children and youth.** ”

ROBYN CHOMYSHYN, POLICY SPECIALIST, UNICEF CANADA



equipment set-up and filming, to archiving the videos in a centralised website for all treaty bodies, www.treatybodywebcast.org

By webcasting the sessions, the NGO Group reached out to broader audiences, including NGOs and national coalitions, as well as UN agencies, children, NHRIs, State representatives and other interested individuals around the world. Prior to each session, the NGO Group contacted NGOs and NHRIs from relevant countries to alert them to the possibility of watching the webcasts live. Some national NGOs were able to raise awareness about child rights and spark interest in watching their State's review by alerting their networks and the media.

The webcasting provides a valuable tool for NGOs at national level to raise awareness about the work of the Committee and child rights in meetings and trainings. Through this record of the explanations and commitments made by the government delegation during their dialogue with the Committee, NGOs and other national stakeholders can plan their follow-up actions. To ensure on-going access to the work of the Committee, we will continue webcasting in 2013.

Summarising State reviews

The NGO Group wrote reports on the Committee's 2012 sessions reviewing 23 States, including the presentations made by the States, key questions raised by the Committee and corresponding answers given by States. These comprehensive records of the discussions are produced for the use of national civil society and others. The NGO Group is the only organisation that systematically

“ The Day of General Discussion is an opportunity for sharing and learning from each other. I would like to thank profusely all the participants and namely the NGO Group, not just for organising the day, but for their sustained presence with the Committee. ”



MARTA MAURAS PEREZ, VICE-CHAIR OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD LEADING THE ORGANISATION OF THE DAY OF GENERAL DISCUSSION



Presentation at the 2012 Day of General Discussion on Children in the Context of International Migration. The NGO Group helped organise the event.

writes country reports on all issues raised during all the State reviews. These reports are posted on our website and disseminated to national NGOs from the State under review as well as more broadly to other civil society actors.

CLOSE COLLABORATION WITH THE COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Maintaining and fostering a positive and effective working relationship with the Committee is central to the NGO Group's work both on the CRC reporting process and the other areas of work of the Committee, as well as exploring new ways to strengthen child rights. Our activities related to the election process, supporting the organisation of the Day of General Discussion, providing input on General Comments, and even introducing live webcasting, are all part of our on-going support to the Committee and for the realisation of our goal to ensure that international human rights mechanisms effect meaningful change for the advancement of child rights. In 2012, the main activities and meetings with the Committee included:

Co-organising the Day of General Discussion

As for previous Days of General Discussion, the NGO Group was actively involved in the planning and execution of this year's day on *Children in the Context of International Migration*. We met regularly with the Committee and its Secretariat, as well as a small group of organisations working on this theme, to organise the day, contribute to the concept note and propose expert speakers. With links to international, regional and national NGOs, we promoted the event and encouraged

“ The NGO Group for the CRC has become, over time, a key partner in consultations conducted by the Committee in the process of drafting its General Comments. The opinions of this partner are awaited with interest and hold great weight with the Committee. ”

JEAN ZERMATTEN, CHAIR, UN COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD



active civil society participation. As it took place at the end of the second week of the CRC session, we also encouraged NGOs attending the session to participate in the Day of General Discussion, providing them with the opportunities to learn or share their best practices. To facilitate the networking of all the key actors attending the Day of General Discussion, the NGO Group also hosted a reception after the event.

Providing expertise in the drafting of the General Comments

To strengthen the understanding and implementation of the provisions of the CRC and its OPs, the Committee has been working on five General Comments on the following topics: harmful practices, the best interests of the child, health, the right to play and business and child rights. In response to the Committee's calls for input, the NGO Group has been involved in activities around the drafting of these General Comments in 2012. Our activities included: participating in expert meetings and seminars, particularly on the right to play and business and child rights; submitting papers and commenting on drafts of all the General Comments; collating the input of NGO partners into papers and drafts; and proposing strategies for external consultations. The NGO Group also kept interested NGO partners around the world updated on the drafting processes and encouraged civil society participation in the elaboration of the General Comments, a process that is closely followed by many as they are keen to have the Committee's official interpretation on how provisions of the CRC and its OPs should be applied in practice.

MOBILISING KEY STAKEHOLDERS AROUND THE CRC ELECTIONS

"The efficient functioning of the treaty bodies is due largely to the hard and dedicated work of their members." Navi Pillay, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

Throughout the treaty body strengthening process, the High Commissioner for Human Rights,

NGOs and many States have consistently agreed that the treaty bodies can only be as effective as the people who represent them. The NGO Group could not agree more, which is why it has been actively involved in the elections of the Committee on the Rights of the Child for over a decade.

To achieve a high level of expertise among the members of the Committee, the NGO Group contacted States and NGOs to encourage the nomination and election of the most suitably qualified experts from amongst their nationals. To promote balanced representation on the Committee and identify potential gaps, the NGO Group analysed the regions, genders and competencies of the Committee members who were remaining, those who were standing down and those who were running for re-election.

To complement the criteria set out in article 43(2) of the CRC (i.e. high moral standing; recognised competence; personal capacity; and consideration for equitable geographical distribution and the principal legal systems) the NGO Group has developed additional criteria which are important for the position of Committee member, namely:

- **demonstrated expertise in the field of human rights and particular commitment to respect for children's human rights**
- **a variety of complementary professional backgrounds**
- **independence and impartiality**
- **the ability to devote sufficient time to the work of the Committee**
- **experience working with a broad range of stakeholders (UN agencies, NHRIs, NGOs and children)**
- **an awareness of, and sensitivity to, cultural differences**
- **fluent in one of the three working languages (English, French, Spanish)**
- **experience dealing with communications/ complaints from children or their representatives, either as a child victim's representative or as part of the body or institution examining the complaints**

Engaging with key stakeholders about nominating and electing child rights experts

To ensure that States parties and NGOs have sufficient time to prepare for the elections, the NGO Group provided information³ on the nomination and election processes in advance of the official announcement. We mobilised NGOs and States, especially from regions which are underrepresented on the Committee, to put forward the most qualified candidates based on our list of criteria. Letters were sent to all States parties encouraging the nomination of the most qualified candidates. To encourage national, regional and international NGOs to coordinate their efforts and propose candidates to States, the NGO Group wrote to them, circulated its fact-sheets on the election process and cooperated with CRIN to disseminate the information on the elections. NGOs in many regions encouraged their governments to select national experts on child rights who met the criteria set out by the CRC and complemented by the NGO Group.

The NGO Group responded to queries and supported NGOs and coalitions, especially those from under-represented regions, to advocate for qualified candidates. Once all the nominations were received, we solicited the feedback of NGOs based in the countries of the candidates. Feedback and, in some cases letters of support, were received from national, regional and international NGOs, for nearly 90 per cent of the nominees. To help achieve a high level of expertise among the members of the Committee, we then notified States parties about this feedback and shared it with those who were interested. As a neutral actor, the NGO Group's role was to promote the

role of States in ensuring the effectiveness of the treaty body through the election process and as such to make available background information on all candidates running for election.

On 18 December 2012 at the General Assembly in New York, nine members of the Committee on the Rights of the Child were elected by States parties in a single round of voting by secret ballot. With eight new members joining the Committee, this is one of the most significant changes since 2003, when the membership increased from 10 to 18 experts. Active engagement of NGOs and the growing interest of States parties to hold national nomination processes led to the nomination and election of several highly qualified candidates.

Interviewing candidates

For the second time, and in anticipation of the Committee elections, the NGO Group and CRIN joined forces to provide States with complete information about candidates. CRIN interviewed the candidates on a voluntary basis to provide them with the opportunity to talk about their experience in children's rights; what they think they can contribute to the work of the Committee; what they consider to be the key issues in child rights; and their vision for the Committee.

The interviews were posted on CRIN's website after approval by the relevant candidates. The NGO Group informed States parties about this supplementary information, together with the feedback from national NGOs, to assist them in finding out more about the candidates and in deciding who to vote for during the elections.

³ The official process starts in June/July for the elections in December, but the NGO Group contacts States and NGOs in April to give them more time to propose highly qualified candidates.

2. Making the international system more accessible to children

While children are increasingly participating in processes to monitor, report on and advocate for their rights, the international human rights system still needs to find ways to effectively incorporate children's views in its work.

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 and mechanisms. In 2012, the NGO Group focused on promoting child participation in the reporting process and facilitating children's engagement with the Committee (see page 1); providing training on child participation in its forums and workshops (see page 12); exploring the use of new technologies to get children's views across in formal meetings; producing more child-friendly materials; and assisting the Committee in developing an approach and working methods to facilitate child participation in its work.

Meaningful child participation in the work of the Committee

As the expert body on child rights and given the increasing participation of children in most of the Committee's areas of work, the NGO Group has been supporting the Committee to develop an overall approach to child participation as well as specific working methods on child participation in the reporting process. In its General Comment no. 12 (2009) on The Right of the Child to be Heard, the Committee officially recognised the role of child-led organisations and children's representatives in the reporting process. Using the Committee's General Comment, as well as its existing working methods, rules of procedure, guidelines for the participation of partners in the pre-session and our guides on child participation, we helped prepare draft working methods and met with the Committee to discuss them. This area of work will continue in 2013, with the hope that they will be adopted by the Committee.

For the other areas of work of the Committee, such as the Day of General Discussion, the NGO Group assisted two child panellists from Asia



Children from Albania preparing to meet with Committee members to give their perspective on the situation of child rights in their country.

and Africa in preparing for the event and understanding what to expect as an outcome. We also supported the initiative of Save the Children to show a film with children from around the world sharing their views about international migration, an effective way to get children's views heard in international meetings.

Ensuring that OP3 CRC is adapted to children

As the new Optional Protocol to the CRC on a Communications Procedure (OP3 CRC) should be relevant, easily accessible and understandable to children, so that they will be able to use this mechanism to report violations of their rights, the NGO Group strived to collect children's views in various events or working methods.

In collaboration with Save the Children Japan, a video with Japanese children's messages about OP3 CRC and what it will bring to them and other children, was shown during the signing ceremony for the OP3 CRC on 28 February, 2012. In addition, a questionnaire was prepared to get children's views about the rules of procedure and working methods of the Committee to ensure that children and their representatives will be able to use a mechanism which is adapted to children's specific rights and needs (see page 18).



A video presentation by children from Japan at the official signing ceremony for OP3 CRC in Geneva.

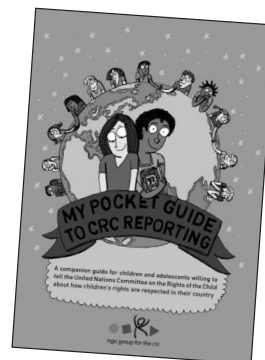
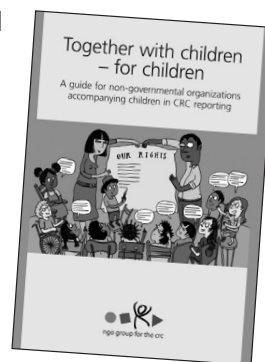
To ensure that children understand OP3 CRC and how it could be used by children. The NGO Group also produced a child-friendly leaflet in Arabic, English, French, Russian and Spanish languages, in consultation with children in different regions of the world (see page 22).

Dissemination of guides and information on child participation

To ensure that children and NGOs accompanying them are able to learn from the best practices and have realistic expectations about reporting to the Committee, the NGO Group has been

broadly referring to and disseminating its guides *Together with children – for children* and *My pocket guide to CRC reporting* in all the trainings, expert meetings and NGO forums which it has taken part in or organised. In addition, the NGO Group has been consistently disseminating and using these guides to advise child participants who are preparing their own reports and meeting with the Committee in Geneva.

For children to be as prepared as possible for their meetings with the Committee in Geneva, the NGO Group also briefs them via Skype a few weeks before their trip. Thus giving them time to decide their key messages and get ready to optimise the use of their meeting with the Committee.



3. Bringing the UN human rights system closer to home: capacity building for NGOs

The NGO Group has established strong legitimacy in its work with the Committee, the new Optional Protocol on a Communications Procedure (OP3 CRC) and in mainstreaming child rights within other components of the UN human rights system.

As an essential component of our approach is to connect the crucial work done by national, regional and international NGOs with the UN human rights system, the NGO Group provides training on the international processes and mechanisms relevant to child rights.

Our trainings are specifically tailored to the needs of each audience to assist them to make the most of their advocacy on child rights and their engagement with the UN system. Over the course of the year, the NGO Group organised, led and participated in meetings, conferences and trainings in Africa, Asia, Europe and Latin America, to develop the capacity of NGOs to effectively use the UN human rights system to help advance child rights in their countries. In addition to three NGO Forums and a series of other trainings in Geneva, the NGO Group took part in national or regional workshops or meetings in Burkina Faso, France, Jordan, Panama, Swaziland and Thailand. As part of the campaign to ratify OP3 CRC, the NGO Group organised national or regional trainings on advocacy for the new OP in Belgium, Indonesia, Panama, Thailand, and Turkey (see page 17).

To ensure that we can respond to as many requests for resources and training as possible, we are increasingly using webinars or videoconferencing to do presentations as part of expert meetings or trainings throughout the world. In 2012, these included events in Peru, Panama, Germany and the Human Rights Education Associates (HREA) webinar.

After the Arab Spring: continued support for NGOs in the Middle East and North Africa

The significant mobilisation of civil society and NGOs in the Middle East and North Africa since the Arab Spring has sparked great interest at national and regional level of NGOs who want to form child rights coalitions and engage in reporting on the CRC. In February 2012, the NGO Group led a two-day workshop in Jordan at the request of Save the Children International. This was the second training that the NGO Group had undertaken as part of the MANARA Project.⁴ It focused on capacity building for CRC reporting in the project's newly included North African countries, with NGO representatives from Algeria, Egypt, Morocco and Tunisia as well as participants from Jordan and Yemen.

⁴ The MANARA project is an international effort initiated in 2008 by Save the Children International MENA Regional Office to increase the capacity of child rights NGOs in Algeria, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Morocco, the Occupied Palestine Territories, Tunisia and Yemen.

During the training, the participants learnt about the CRC reporting process, the preparation of alternative reports, managing State consultations with NGOs in their reports, child participation and follow-up to concluding observations. The NGO Group also raised awareness about OP3



NGO Group Director, Lisa Myers (far left), with participants of the capacity building workshop in Jordan.

CRC and the ratification campaign. The support provided by the NGO Group to facilitate NGO participation in submitting alternative reports and meeting with the Committee was also explained and has since been put into practice for some of the countries, which were examined by the Committee. In addition to meeting new actors from the region, the NGO Group developed its understanding of the dynamics, expectations and needs of these organisations, which is essential to tailor our support to their needs.



Training participants from Swaziland and Malawi complete a group exercise on child participation in CRC reporting.

Capacity building of the new West African regional child rights network

As part of the regional planning meeting of *L'Union des coalitions ouest-africaines pour l'enfance* (UCOA), a new sub-regional network of child rights coalitions in West Africa, the NGO Group advised coalition representatives on the opportunities at international level to advance child right issues relevant to their countries. As the only such network in the region, and given its recent growth and development, it was an opportune moment for the NGO Group to explain the latest developments in CRC reporting and effective ways to use the Committee's recommendations to feed into the long-term advocacy objectives and activities of the network.

The three-day regional meeting, which was held in Burkina Faso in July, was attended by 24 participants representing the national child rights coalitions from Benin, Burkina Faso, Côte d'Ivoire, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Guinea Conakry, Mali, Niger, Senegal, Sierra Leone and Togo.

During the meeting, the NGO Group acted in an advisory capacity, drawing participants' attention to the opportunities to engage with international mechanisms such as the Committee, the Universal Period Review (UPR) and the Human Rights Council. In addition, the NGO Group con-

ducted a seminar on recent developments in the reporting process and follow-up actions to the Committee's concluding observations in line with our holistic approach to the reporting cycle. This workshop also provided an opportunity to raise awareness about OP3 CRC, what it will bring and how civil society can take part in national ratification campaigns.

This meeting not only ensured that NGOs and coalitions gained a clearer understanding of how to effectively link national, regional and international advocacy on child rights, but also to strengthen working relations and to stay informed about emerging child rights issues and new developments. This deeper understanding allows the NGO Group to customise its support to NGOs and coalitions in their future advocacy and reporting activities.

Building on strong monitoring and reporting systems in Southern Africa

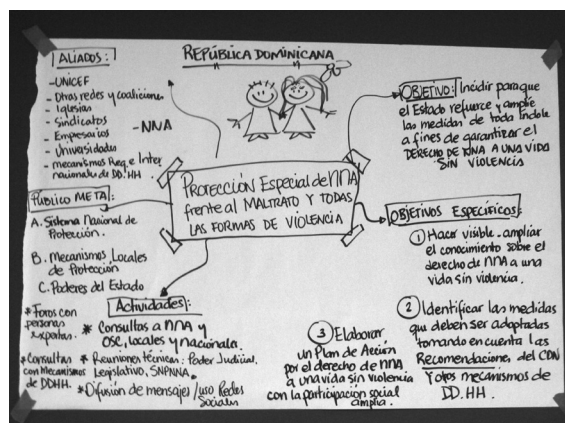
During a four-day training session, nineteen members of the Swaziland Children's Rights Consortium came together with two representatives from national child rights coalitions from Malawi and Mozambique to increase their capacity to monitor and report on the CRC and the OPs. The NGO Group provided training on how national child rights NGOs can function as a coalition for effective national level advocacy and engagement in all stages of the CRC reporting cycle. We drew on examples of good practices in reporting and follow-up to concluding observations with presentations from Malawi and Mozambique; the Swaziland Children's Consortium enhanced its capacity to develop a strategic approach to monitoring the situation of child rights in the country, with a view to advancing the rights of children through effective engagement with the Committee and follow-up to its concluding observations. The NGO Group presentations also covered ways that NGOs can incorporate child participation into the monitoring and reporting processes and the importance of including children and their views in reporting and advocacy activities.

Expanding best practices in CRC reporting in Latin America and the Caribbean

In April, the NGO Group travelled to Panama for a three-day training, which was organised by the Plan International regional office, on international human rights mechanisms for child rights NGOs. Many NGOs from this region already actively engage in alternative reporting on the CRC and

“ The workshop organized by the NGO Group on the Convention on the Rights of the Child with Plan International for the Latin America and Caribbean region was a very well received learning opportunity. The level of expertise and experience the NGO Group brought to this meeting helped bring the UN Human Rights Mechanisms to life and helped participants identify how to better utilize these to promote children’s rights in the LAC region. ”

MONICA DARER, REGIONAL CHILD RIGHTS ADVISOR, PLAN INTERNATIONAL



Ideas generated in a group exercise during the training Panama, showing concrete steps and actors that could be involved in follow-up activities to Concluding Observations.

wanted to reinforce and expand their activities. With the group’s strengths in mind, the NGO Group presented ways that NGOs can improve reporting and follow-up activities to the CRC and its OPs; child participation; launching initiatives and advocacy opportunities within the HRC; as well as OP3 CRC.

The workshop was attended by 35 representatives from national coalitions and the Plan International offices from 12 countries in Central and South America and the Caribbean. Given the expertise in the region on preparing alternative reports, the NGO Group focused on ways to build on the reporting process at national level, such as the follow-up to concluding observations as well as using other international mechanisms, such as the HRC and Special Rapporteurs to strengthen their advocacy for child rights. In addition to the training, it was an opportunity for the participants to learn from some of their best practices in the region, such as the involvement of children in monitoring and advocating for child rights in Peru or following up on concluding observations in Guatemala. The new OP3 CRC was also introduced and participants gained an understanding of the treaty and how it will contribute to reinforce the rights of children as well as the ratification campaign and how they can get involved in it.

In addition to training NGO representatives, meetings in the region provide a good opportunity to learn about interesting new initiatives, such as the follow-up to concluding observations, which informed some of our case studies on follow-up (see page 2). Furthermore, given the signatory States from the region of OP3 CRC (see page 15), it was a good opportunity to mobilise NGOs to advocate for ratification in their respective countries. In addition to building capacity of NGOs, the NGO Group also met the Brazilian candidate for the CRC elections and discussed the election process and the work of the Committee.

Developing expertise on reporting under OPSC and OPAC in Asia

As part of a series of trainings in accordance with a five-year project lead by Plan International, the NGO Group took part in a four-day training in Thailand in November. Twenty two national child rights coalition representatives from Bangladesh, Cambodia, China, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand and Vietnam, with support from the Plan Asia Regional Office, developed their knowledge about effectively monitoring and reporting on the OPSC and OPAC. The aim of the workshop was to develop national child rights coalitions’ understanding of these treaties and the importance of reporting on them. In many cases, international NGOs with a thematic focus on sexual exploitation or children in armed conflict prepare reports on the two OPs, but they do not usually report on all the countries and are not necessarily in a position to follow-up the Committee’s recommendations in-country. The NGO Group, therefore, wanted to demonstrate the crucial role that national organisations – and particularly national child rights coalitions – can play in effectively monitoring the OPSC and OPAC, given their expertise and overview on the child rights situation as a whole.

Through the training, the participants were able to assess their needs as a coalition, as well as current capacity and expertise, to monitor and



Children from Albania and a representative from the Austrian Permanent Mission to the UN presenting their views in an NGO Forum.

report on OPAC and OPSC, including by inviting national NGOs with a relevant thematic focus to join their coalitions. Finally, the NGO Group facilitated discussions to identify ways for the coalitions to integrate OP reporting into the CRC reporting activities they already undertake. This in-depth training on the OPAC and OPSC emphasised the need to focus on these treaties in detail in future workshops.

NGO Group Forums – A unique chance for NGOs to learn from each other

Three times a year, the NGO Group offers an opportunity to all the NGO representatives participating in the pre-sessions to meet and learn from each other's experience as well as to develop their expertise in follow-up to concluding observations, involving children in monitoring, and using other mechanisms such as UPR. Because the pre-sessions include countries from different regions, this forum is a unique opportunity for NGOs, who would rarely have the chance to come together, to share their best practices.

These half-day forums combine a training component from NGO Group and other experts with best practices and experiences being shared by the NGOs participants. They gain practical information and advice on how to improve advocacy and incorporate international level advocacy in their national activities.

In 2012, 48 participants including three children took part in the NGO Forums. They represented 16 countries: Albania, Armenia, Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Burkina Faso, Canada, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Guyana, Lithuania,

Namibia, Paraguay, Philippines, Rwanda, Slovakia, and Uzbekistan. The children from Albania presented their experiences both at national and international level, which could be used to inspire other participants on how to facilitate child participation in advocacy activities. In order to provide a broad range of perspectives on the UPR, external speakers from SOS Children's Villages and World Vision International shared their best practices and a representative from the Austrian Permanent Mission to the UN explained the political nature of the process and effective ways to influence it. The NGO also presented OP3 CRC and how it could affect children's access to justice and the possibilities to get involved in the ratification campaign.

All our practical tools and publications, whether they are on the CRC, child participation, UPR and OP3 CRC, are given to forum participants. The NGO Group follows up with the participants in preparation for the session with their State and provides practical advice about the opportunities for international-level engagement like the ones discussed during the forums.

SHARING NGO GROUP EXPERTISE REGIONALLY AND INTERNATIONALLY

In addition to the capacity building components of our work, the NGO Group is often invited to expert meetings at regional and international level or takes part in webinars to share our expertise on the work of the Committee, OP3 CRC, as well as the broader UN human rights mechanisms and processes. The following activities provide some of the main highlights for 2012:

NGO engagement in the work of the Human Rights Council

The NGO Group was invited to share its experience and knowledge on advocacy at the UN level during side events at two sessions of the HRC with a broad human rights civil society audience, not just focusing on child rights. During these side events co-organised by Mandat International and the World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA) in March and September, the NGO Group provided insights on effective NGO participation and advocacy at the HRC.

“ Your practical, honest and comprehensive presentations were highly appreciated and did highlight some useful formal and informal ways for NGOs to interact with the UN human rights mechanisms. ”

WIEBKE HARMS, HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION PROGRAM OFFICER, WORLD FEDERATION OF UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATIONS



NGO Group Advocacy Officer Anita Goh presents at a side event, *The Human Rights Council for Newcomers*, during the 19th Human Rights Council.

Given the work that the NGO Group has carried out at the HRC, we focused on providing information on informal ways for NGOs to engage with the HRC including how to plan lobbying activities, how to approach state delegations, and useful resources. As a result, civil society participants gained a better understanding of advocacy and entry points to the HRC. Taking part in events which are not only focused on the UN child rights mechanisms, the NGO Group is having a growing influence on discussions regarding the broad UN human rights system.

The NGO Group was also asked to present the role of NGOs in follow up to decisions and recommendations of UN human rights mechanisms on children's rights in the context of the International workshop on *Enhancing cooperation between UN and regional human rights mechanisms*, which was organised by OHCHR in December. This provided an opportunity to share some of the good practices which came out of our research on follow-up and our case studies.

Expert meeting on children's rights in Europe

Given the NGO Group's expertise in child participation in the work of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, we were invited to share our experience and insight at an expert meeting *Monitoring children's rights in Europe* in Strasbourg. Over 40 high-level representatives attended from major European institutions including Council of Europe monitoring bodies such as those on torture, racism and intolerance, and minorities, European Commission, European Committee of Social Rights, the European Court of Human Rights, the European Union Fundamental Rights Agency, European Network of Ombudspersons for Children (ENOC), the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, UNICEF, UNHCR and NGOs.

The NGO Group's presentation focused on engaging children in monitoring their rights and exploring opportunities for child participation in Council of Europe monitoring processes, based on the lessons learnt from child participation in the CRC reporting process. The NGO Group shared the complexity of facilitating child participation in formal processes, the value of child participation both for children and for the monitoring systems as well as the most common obstacles and ways to overcome them. NGO Group's guides on child participation were distributed to the participants.

The NGO Group was also invited to the 7th European Forum on the rights of the child of the European Commission where it shared its expertise during a workshop themed *Child protection systems and child-friendly justice*.

These regional meetings provided an opportunity to identify possible areas of collaboration with European partners both in relation to monitoring child rights and OP3 CRC. The NGO Group consolidated relations with relevant regional-level contacts and fostered new relationships with key actors in the region.

4. The road to ratification: working towards the entry into force of the third optional protocol

In 2012, the NGO Group made great strides in its efforts towards the ratification and entry into force of the new Optional Protocol to the CRC on a Communications Procedure (OP3 CRC). Building on our expertise and position as a key proponent of OP3 CRC since the beginning of the drafting process, the NGO Group was instrumental in the creation of a new coalition and the development and dissemination of advocacy tools. Through our own ratification campaign along with OP3 CRC awareness-raising sessions and trainings at national and regional levels, the NGO Group Secretariat has taken the lead in moving towards cross-regional ratification of this new treaty.

A New Platform: Ratify OP3 CRC – International Coalition for the OPCRC on a Communications Procedure

After the adoption of OP3 CRC, the NGO Group moved quickly to create a coordinating platform bringing together national, regional and international NGOs and other non-State actors from all regions of the world. Working closely with members of our past internal Working Group on an Optional Protocol for a Communications Procedure, the NGO Group supported the formation of Ratify OP3 CRC – International Coalition for the OPCRC on a Communications Procedure (International Coalition), established in March. The International Coalition is led by two co-chairs as part of a twelve-member Steering Committee of international and regional child rights NGOs. Because of our expertise and the active role in supporting the drafting of OP3 CRC, the NGO Group Secretariat's was elected to co-chair the

“ Finally I would just like to close by acknowledging the hard work of our civil society partners, in particular the NGO Group for the CRC, in advocating and acting for the realisation of children's rights. We look forward to continue working with all of you – States, civil society, and the Committee itself, in making rights real for children. ”

NICOLETTE MOODIE, HUMAN RIGHTS AND GENDER LIAISON OFFICER, UNICEF, OFFICIAL LAUNCH OF THE INTERNATIONAL COALITION



Members of the Committee on the Rights of the Child at the Official Launch of the International Coalition.

Steering Committee of the International Coalition together with Save the Children. The International Coalition was officially launched in June at a reception during the HRC session. It provided an opportunity for States, Committee members, UNICEF and the Coalition to build momentum for the ratification campaign.

After just six months, the International Coalition has 55 members representing all regions of the world and including national human rights institutions as well as child rights networks and NGOs working at the national, regional and international levels. The NGO Group developed the identity of the International Coalition, including creating its official name, logo and website in English, French and Spanish. We also created campaign tools and materials for the members to use in their national campaigns for OP3 CRC.

“ We can only be proud that very soon the optional protocol will be a new and unique tool to better protect children’s rights, a tool which will be adapted to the special needs of children and the nature of the rights protected under the Convention. ”

KYUNG-WHA KANG, UNITED NATIONS DEPUTY HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS, OFFICIAL SIGNING CEREMONY FOR OP3 CRC

Leading the ratification campaign for a rapid entry into force of OP3 CRC

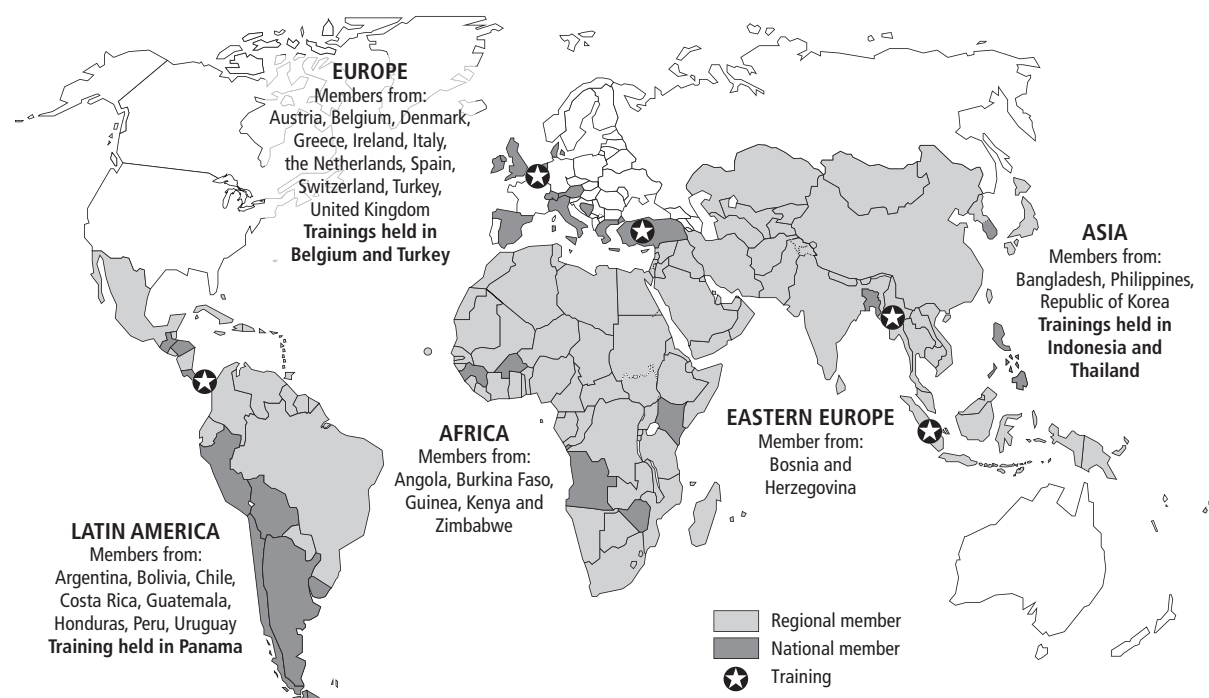
In addition to establishing the International Coalition, the NGO Group launched its own ratification campaign. The NGO Group undertook direct advocacy activities targeting 10 States from all regions. We prioritised States that can rapidly ratify international treaties, especially complaints procedures; States in Asia (as there is no regional

mechanism) and Africa (as there were very few signatories); and States where partners were mobilised to campaign for ratification. In addition to broad awareness raising, the NGO Group has seen several concrete achievements related to our ratification campaign including: the signing of OP3 CRC by Morocco and Mali during the official signing ceremony after actively lobbying their missions in Geneva; and the ratification of OP3 CRC by Thailand after intense advocacy work undertaken together with NGO partners, especially the Life Skills Development Foundation and ECPAT International Secretariat, and UNICEF.

The NGO Group Secretariat effectively reached out to civil society partners and diplomatic missions through letter campaigns, especially around two official UN days encouraging the signature of OP3 CRC. Leading up to the official signing event on 28 February, the NGO Group drafted letters in English, French and Spanish disseminating news of the ceremony through partners’ networks and reaching out to 64 priority diplomatic missions in Geneva calling for their States’ signature and rati-

2012 Ratify OP3 CRC International Coalition Members and NGO Group Activities

International: 11 international members
Regional: 1 African regional member; 1 Asian regional member;
 1 Latin American regional member; 1 MENA regional member



Ratify OP3 CRC International Coalition is composed of 55 national, regional and international non-governmental organisations and networks, human rights institutions and other non-governmental bodies from across the world.

Ratify OP3 CRC

INTERNATIONAL COALITION FOR THE OPCRC
ON A COMMUNICATIONS PROCEDURE

International Coalition empowering members in all regions of the world

As Co-Chair of the International Coalition, the NGO Group has taken the lead in producing and disseminating informational and advocacy tools to raise awareness and encourage ratification of OP3 CRC. Reaching out to members and NGOs, the NGO Group produced materials in Arabic, English, French, Spanish and Russian. On behalf of the International Coalition, the NGO Group produced an Information Pack, Ratification Toolkit and a leaflet of frequently asked questions about OP3 CRC, which was translated into Arabic, English, French, Spanish, Russian (see page 22). Recognising the importance of child participation for the effective use of OP3 CRC, the NGO Group created a Child-Friendly OP3 CRC Leaflet, in consultation with children's groups, which will be available in the beginning of 2013.

The NGO Group Secretariat also developed and maintained the International Coalition website in English, Spanish and French, to keep members updated about OP3 CRC news. We also created a members' corner where more sensitive advocacy documents and confidential news can be shared.

Thanks to the updated information and advocacy documents and tools produced by the NGO Group and circulated throughout the International Coalition, members organised events to raise awareness on OP3 and set up national ratification campaigns. In parliaments, members of the International Coalition introduced questions on OP3 CRC to be addressed at national level. They also succeeded in obtaining international recommendations through UN mechanisms, like the UPR, asking for the speedy signature and ratification of OP3 to their States. The capacity-building information provided by the NGO Group as part of the International Coalition allowed members to more effectively lobby their governments to sign and ratify the new treaty.



NGO Group Staff and partners at the official signing ceremony for OP3 CRC.

fication of OP3 CRC. Twenty States representing all regions signed the Protocol on the day.

Working within the framework of the International Coalition, the NGO Group drafted and sent letters to 71 diplomatic missions for the UN signing event in September. Nine additional States signed and 2 States ratified OP3 CRC on that occasion. By the end of the year, 35 States had signed OP3 CRC and 2 States, Gabon and Thailand, had ratified it.

Building a broad base: reaching out to children, NGOs and other key stakeholders

The NGO Group has become a main information and coordination point for organisations seeking to know more and get involved with the OP3

CRC ratification campaign. Responding to calls for strategic informational trainings, the NGO Group presented on OP3 CRC at national and regional advocacy meetings, including to the 22 participants of the CRC/UPR training organised by Plan International in Panama (see page 11); to South-East Asian NGOs attending the Civil Society Organisations Forum in Indonesia; to NGOs in Indonesia and Thailand; and to European NGOs and child Ombudspersons in Brussels. In Turkey, the NGO Group reached more than 150 NGO Representatives, lawyers and child participants during three events. We collaborated with UNICEF Turkey to present OP3 CRC to the Union of Turkish Bar Associations, to the children participating to the Turkish Child Forum, to Turkish NGOs and to the Turkish Parliamentary Child Rights Committee.

As a result of these training sessions, a coalition of NGOs working towards the ratification of OP3 CRC was established in Bangladesh and in Turkey, and leading NGOs based in Latin America, Asia and Europe joined the International Coalition.⁵

To reach as many people as possible in the most resource-effective way, the NGO Group utilised new communications technologies, like video-conferences and webinars, to broadcast training events held in Geneva in English, French and Spanish. In 2012, the NGO Group delivered tailor-made online presentations upon request

⁵ See the membership list at: <http://www.ratifyop3crc.org/ourmembers/>



In July, at the ASEAN Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Women and Children (ACWC) meeting in Thailand, where the NGO Group gave a presentation on OP3 CRC, ACWC recommended ASEAN member States to put OP3 CRC in national and regional level agendas.

via Skype and webinar platforms to NGOs based in Spain, Latin America and Bangladesh. We worked closely with International Coalition member organisations, YMCA Costa Rica and COSE-CODENI, to prepare a presentation that was delivered at a panel during the V World Congress for the Rights of Children and Adolescents (October, Argentina) to over 400 participants, including government representatives from several Latin American countries.

2012 OP3 CRC training events in Geneva included: the NGO Group's NGO Forums, which gathered NGOs from 22 countries (see page 12); the 2012 Child Rights Summer School called the "Child Rights Caravan" passing through Brussels, Luxembourg, Strasbourg, Sion and Geneva which gathered lawyers, academics, NGOs and other professionals from Algeria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Democratic Republic of Congo, France, Luxembourg, Madagascar and Switzerland; and the training session of children's rights advocacy

at the international level organised for child rights advocates from Defence for Children International.

Child-Friendly and Protective Rules of Procedure

During the year, the Committee was in the process of drafting new rules of procedure to govern how it will carry out its tasks under OP3 CRC. Because the procedure established by OP3 CRC allows children to complain directly to the Committee, without legal representation, it is essential that the Committee's rules of procedure are as child-friendly and protective as possible. The NGO Group, therefore, undertook significant research on exemplary rules of procedure at regional and international levels. We compiled information on rules of procedure and guidelines from European, African and Inter-American human rights systems, and of existing international complaints procedures. Based on this research, we produced suggestions and recommendations for the Com-

“ I am very pleased to have contributed to the promotion of the Protocol in this important Congress. I appreciate your support and the trust which made my participation possible. ”

XINIA BRENES, GENERAL DIRECTOR YMCA COSTA RICA ABOUT THE COLLABORATION FOR THE PRESENTATION OF OP3 DURING THE V WORLD CONGRESS

mittee focusing on how to ensure a child-friendly procedure and then submitted a preliminary document of suggestions and inputs from a variety of actors to the Committee.

Based on the comprehensive and useful information provided in this preliminary document, which included key partners' and children's views, the NGO Group was invited by the Committee to submit additional comments on a first draft of the rules of procedure in August 2012. The Committee will adopt the new rules of procedure in 2013.

Looking ahead: preparing key actors for the effective use of OP3 CRC

In conjunction with our activities to mobilise national NGO partners to campaign for the rapid entry into force of OP3 CRC, we have also begun exploring ways to effectively implement OP3 CRC once it enters into force. A first step was already taken in December 2012 with the collection and compilation of documents from the negotiation period of OP3 CRC with the aim of developing a legal commentary on this new treaty in 2013. This commentary will serve as a reference document, which can be used by different stakeholders, including legal practitioners and governments.

5. Broader protection for child rights in the UN human rights system

The NGO Group takes a comprehensive approach towards promoting the implementation of the CRC. To expand our outreach beyond child rights-specific mechanisms, such as the Committee on the Rights of the Child, we find ways to integrate child rights issues into the broad UN human rights system, from the HRC and its UPR to influencing discussions on treaty body strengthening.

2012 marked the first year of our 3-year strategy on mainstreaming child rights. Through this strategy, we aim to ensure that key human rights mechanisms include a child rights perspective and that child rights NGOs with relevant expertise engage with these mechanisms. As one of our strategic priorities, mainstreaming child rights in relevant activities of other UN human rights mechanisms and procedures was a focus of many NGO Group activities throughout the year.

In addition to the work carried out by the Secretariat, our thematic Working Groups (see page 23) interact regularly with relevant UN bodies to promote child rights.

Ensuring diverse expertise in the HRC's Annual Day on the Rights of the Child

Since the first HRC Annual Day on the Rights of the Child in 2009, the NGO Group has been the only civil society organisation consistently involved in the planning process with States and UN actors involved in organising the event. Depending on the theme of the day, we bring together NGOs with relevant expertise and represent NGO priorities in discussions with the States and UN agencies. As co-organisers of the 2012 Annual Day, which was focused on children and the administration of justice, the NGO Group facilitated the involvement of child rights and other NGOs in the preparation and content of the panels. Activities

included coordinating NGO input on topics and panellists for the Annual Day, as well as NGO priorities in the Omnibus resolution. As a result of these coordinated efforts, six out of ten panellists and seven out of ten topics selected were proposed by NGOs. The NGO Group also provided financial support to the panellist from the African Committee of Experts and reviewed statements from NGO panellists. During the day, the panels covered NGO priorities on children and the administration of justice including inhuman sentencing, pre-trial detention as well as alternatives to detention. In addition, a significant portion of the text of the Omnibus resolution was proposed by NGOs.

“ Together with the IPJJ, the NGO Group helped shape the Annual Day by providing ideas on themes to be addressed and advocating for specific issues to appear, in accordance with the most pressing ones identified by our partners worldwide; suggesting relevant speakers for each theme; reviewing some of the statements prior to the meeting; and ensuring support to the panellists on the day itself. ”

SÉVERINE JOLIAT, SECRETARIAT COORDINATOR, INTERAGENCY PANEL ON JUVENAL JUSTICE (IPJJ)



Presentation of the panellist from the African Committee of Experts, supported by the NGO Group, during the HRC's Annual Day on the Rights of the Child.

“ We thank the NGO Group for their excellent assistance in all aspects of the UPR process. Through their informative and detailed advice, we were able to seize every advocacy opportunity during the UPR process, which resulted in all of our issues being raised. The NGO Group took us through each step of the process and because of this, children’s rights achieved a new level of awareness in our state’s review. ”

ROSS OKE, DIRECTOR OF ADMINISTRATION, TRACK



Leveraging the UPR for greater impact of national level child rights advocacy

With the beginning of the second cycle of the UPR, 2012 brought new opportunities to mainstream child rights within this mechanism. Our activities included personalised technical guidance, new practical tools, the creation of a coordination platform and the preparation of advocacy briefs.

After the success of our first two fact sheets for child rights NGOs on the UPR and the preparation of NGO submissions, the NGO Group, in collaboration with our partner UPR-Info, produced a third fact sheet on successful NGO advocacy, available in English, French and Spanish and began a fourth one on follow-up to UPR recommendations. We also provided technical guidance for UPR submissions on State reviews and advocacy to NGOs in Pakistan, Algeria, the UK and the Republic of Korea.

To ensure the broad coverage of priority child rights issues in the UPR, a new coordination platform was set up for NGOs reporting on child rights. Interested NGOs shared information in meetings and on-line shared documents, which map country coverage, themes and NGO participation in the UPR. This platform provided a unique opportunity to create new synergies between child and human rights organisations for joint advocacy and report submission efforts as well as identifying countries which are not being targeted for child rights issues.

In terms of its own UPR advocacy, the NGO Group researched the ratification status of States, on the OPSC, OPAC and OP3 CRC, their reservations and declarations as well as their non-reporting. Based on this research, advocacy briefs on 17 States were prepared and presented to target States both through the UPR pre-sessions and direct advocacy with missions in Geneva. To push for the rapid entry into force of OP3 CRC, the NGO Group also targeted States to consistently bring up the signature/ratification of this new treaty for all States under review.

Strengthening UN Human Rights Treaty Bodies

With the launch of the report from the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and the intergovernmental process on strengthening the human rights treaty body system, 2012 was a pivotal year for discussions around treaty body strengthening. Having taken part in consultations feeding into the drafting of the High Commissioner’s report, the NGO Group took part in meetings with NGOs and States as well as joint NGO statements and papers reacting to the different proposals being made in the report. Given the specificity of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, with its four treaties, highest number of ratifications and good practices in terms of NGO participation, the NGO Group focused on maintaining the current standards and exploring the best practices of other treaty bodies.

At the beginning of the year, in response to the Russian resolution on strengthening the human rights treaty body system, the NGO Group actively participated in civil society discussions culminating in commenting on and signing a joint NGO statement on recommendations to ensure meaningful civil society participation in this process. Together with partner human rights NGOs, the NGO Group followed the intergovernmental process in New York, taking part in the preparation of joint papers and statements on the themes to be covered by this process (e.g. treaty body elections, resources for treaty bodies, States compliance with their reporting obligations) and trying to ensure that the process did not extend to influencing the working methods and rules of procedure of individual committees. The NGO Group also took part in the civil society consultation in September which was organised by the co-facilitators of this process.

6. Tools and publications

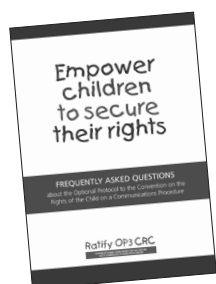
An integral part of accomplishing the NGO Group's objectives is providing timely, practical, in-depth information to key stakeholders at national, regional and international levels on how they can utilise international human rights mechanisms to advance child rights. Our tools and publications support capacity-building and advocacy efforts and increase our impact by allowing partners all over the world to integrate the information and advice we provide into their on-going advocacy and reporting activities. This year we produced new tools as well as updated or reprinted existing materials. Whenever possible, the NGO Group made child-friendly versions of materials and consulted children to produce information interesting and usable for children.

2012 Publications

- OP3 CRC Ratification Leaflet
- Child-Friendly OP3 CRC Leaflet
- OP3 CRC Ratification Toolkit and Information Pack
- UPR Factsheets 3 and 4 (the latter will be finalised in 2013)
- Updated Guide for NGOs Reporting to the Committee on the Rights of the Child
- Case Studies on NGOs use of Concluding Observations (see page 2)
- Reports on States reporting under the CRC and OPs (see page 5)
- Articles for the ISHR Quarterly
- *GroupTalk* quarterly newsletter
- Reprint of guides to reporting on OPSC and OPAC and reporting guidelines for children

The following materials and publications are some of the highlights in 2012:

OP3 CRC Ratification Leaflet – The NGO Group produced a leaflet for the International Coalition, detailing what OP3 CRC is and how NGOs can be involved in the ratification process. It offers a clear explanation of the new Optional Protocol as well as concrete arguments that NGOs can use in their national-level ratification campaigns. The leaflet was produced in Arabic, English, French, Spanish and Russian and is also available on the International Coalition's website.



The **child-friendly OP3 CRC** leaflet, which was drafted in 2012, aims to inform and engage children, adolescents and child-led organisations on OP3 CRC, what it will bring them and how they

can be involved in raising awareness and campaigning for ratification. Consultations with children from Europe, the Middle East and Asia were undertaken, to make the tool as easy to understand and interesting as possible for children. The child-friendly leaflet will be translated into Arabic, French, Spanish and Russian, and will be available at the beginning of 2013.

The NGO Group's ***Guide for NGOs Reporting to the Committee on the Rights of the Child*** has been an indispensable resource complementing the programme work that we carry out to assist national NGOs preparing their alternative reports for the Committee. In order to provide the most practical and relevant information, we have updated the guide and made it available in English, French and Spanish. The updated guide focuses on how NGOs can most effectively engage in each step of the reporting cycle, and use the Committee's recommendations in their own advocacy work.

Reaching out to the child rights and broader human rights communities, the NGO Group wrote articles for the International Service for Human Rights' (ISHR) *Human Rights Monitor Quarterly*. We shared reports and news about States reporting to the Committee, Committee elections, and OP3 CRC to a large audience on our website and through CRINMAILS and the NGO Group member newsletter, *GroupTalk*. In 2012, the NGO Group continued to improve the impact of its email outreach including the *GroupTalk* newsletter and other informational updates, with higher open rates and larger audiences than in past years.

7. Campaigns and activities of thematic working groups

The NGO Group currently has six thematic Working Groups comprised of member organisations working together on specific child rights issues. Through the Working Groups, our members combine forces, giving greater power to their advocacy and mainstreaming efforts. This cooperation also provides a platform for best practice and idea sharing among members.

Detailed information about the Working Groups can be found on our website. The 2012 highlights and activities of the Working Groups are as follows:

Children of Incarcerated Parents

The Working Group actively participated in the HRC Annual Day on the Rights of the Child, and followed up the 2011 CRC Day of General Discussion to support their goals of sharing good policies and practices and to ensuring that this issue is given greater prominence in the UN human rights system. During the HRC Annual Day, four Working Group members made a joint oral intervention asking questions related to children of incarcerated parents; these were answered and appeared in detail in the report of the full-day discussion.

The Working Group also prepared and presented briefing sessions to follow up on the CRC Day of General Discussion on children of incarcerated parents, to a number of important stakeholders including: members of the Committee on the Rights of the Child; members of the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention; Carrefour Prison (a Swiss NGO); and participants in the 2012 UN Crime Commission in Vienna.

One of the convenor organisations, Quaker United Nations Office (QUNO), produced a compilation of discussions, recommendations and good practice from the CRC Day of General Discussion. The paper, *Collateral Convicts*, is available in English, French and Spanish. Continued efforts to mainstream the issue of children of incarcerated parents in UN human rights mechanisms, include through the UPR and the dissemination of new findings and recommendations about children of incarcerated parents to relevant UN audiences through briefings, side events and publications.

Children without Parental Care

The Working Group placed a strong focus on disseminating the UN Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children in 2012. As part of its strategy, Working Group members, led by SOS Children's Villages International (SOS-CVI) and International Social Service (ISS) developed the *Implementation and Monitoring Handbook* for the Guidelines. The handbook will be available in English, French and Spanish. In addition, the Working Group was involved in finalising a document on formal care characteristics with other organisations.

The Working Group also drafted and finalised a joint strategy to promote alternative care issues at the UN with its parallel working group based in New York. In addition to the handbook, this work will involve encouraging support for alternative care issues within diplomatic missions.

The co-convenors, also undertook mainstreaming activities to ensure that all the treaty bodies are aware of the Guidelines and, if relevant, refer to them in their discussions with States and include



Children without Parental Care Working Group Co-Convenors Alan Kikuchi-White and Mia Dambach present to CESCR in Geneva.

them in their concluding observations. Working in close collaboration with key stakeholders, the co-convenors interacted with the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD), the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Committee against Torture (CAT), and the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (CESCR). Several of the committees were positive about integrating the Guidelines into their work.

Children and Violence

The Working Group acts as a global focal point for advancing the recommendations put forward in the UN Study on Violence Against Children, notably by means of advocacy towards key players in Geneva – UN human rights bodies, Diplomatic missions and regional institutions – in collaboration with civil society organisations and networks. Over the course of 2012, the Working Groups delivered oral and written statements to the HRC, working with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children and several UN special rapporteurs and representatives including on violence against women, education, and contemporary forms of slavery.

The Working Group also organised several events with UN and international agencies including the International Labour Organisation (ILO), OHCHR special procedures mandate holders, and candidates for the Committee's 2012 elections. It hosted a well-attended side event, which linked issues related to violence against women and child rights, during the 20th session of the HRC culminating in a report entitled *Children, the indirect victims of violence against women*. The Working Group hopes to follow up on the research for this report in 2013 and create an internal focus group on children and armed conflict.

Indigenous Children

In 2012, the Working Group conducted a series of events to expand their base and to facilitate engagement in international advocacy efforts to improve protection and support of indigenous children's rights. Some of the events took place at the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues (UNPFII) in May and at the International Society for the Prevention of Abuse and Neglect conference in September. A statement was made at the UNPFII and a number of discussion papers drafted in preparation to increase the effectiveness of participation at the forum. The UNPFII accepted the Working Group's recommendation to invite the Committee on the Rights of the Child to its 2013 session. The Working Group is now in com-

munication with the Committee to facilitate this outcome.

Two Working Group members participated in State reviews of Australia and Canada before the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, leading to very strong recommendations on indigenous children. A submission was also prepared to contribute to the Secretary General's report on the rights of children with particular attention to indigenous children.

Mainstreaming Child Rights

During 2012, the Working Group on Mainstreaming Child Rights finalised its new work plan, which divides the activities across three areas: firstly, joint advocacy by members to ensure child rights coverage in Human Rights Council debates and resolutions; secondly, providing a space for relevant thematic groups to form around preparation for the Human Rights Council Annual Day on the rights of the child; and thirdly, support to coordinate lobbying with missions around the Universal Periodic Review in conjunction with the NGO Group Secretariat. Also in 2012, the Working Group supported the HRC Annual Day on the Rights of the Child, which dealt with issues on children and the administration of justice.

Universal Birth Registration

The Working Group successfully engaged and collaborated with NGOs and UN human rights and humanitarian bodies to promote universal birth registration – building strategic alliances with important stakeholders such as the Child Protection Working Group (CPWG), coordinated by UNICEF, and collaborating closely with OHCHR. The Working Group actively engaged in the Human Rights Council and UPR sessions making submissions and recommendations related to Universal Birth Registration. These efforts contributed to the inclusion of language on birth registration in the HRC resolutions on nationality for women and the rights of the child. Furthermore, during the HRC, the resolution on birth registration was unanimously adopted, adding momentum to the Working Group's advocacy for universal birth registration.

Other activities of the Working Group in 2012 included the participation in annual events, such as raising the issue of birth registration for children in international migration during the CRC's Day of General Discussion and hosting an event on birth registration as a protection measure during UNHCR's Annual Consultations with NGOs, which were themed *Redefining Protection for children in Emergencies*.

8. Organisational development

Expert Speaker at General Assembly: Special Rapporteur on Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography



**Najat Malla M'Jid, UN
Special Rapporteur on
the sale of children,
child prostitution and
child pornography**

On 9 March, the NGO Group held its General Assembly, in which Najat Malla M'Jid, UN Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, was the guest of honour.

Malla M'Jid thanked the NGO Group for its commitment to protect and promote child rights worldwide, and its outstanding work in this domain. She stated that

the NGO Group is a model for coordination, capitalisation of knowledge and sharing of good practices. In addition, Malla M'Jid outlined the ways in which NGOs can engage with her mandate and expressed her gratitude to NGOs for providing information and analysis on human rights issues and follow-up at national level. She mentioned that she had worked through the NGO Group when she was working with a Moroccan NGO.

She also highlighted that the remit of her mandate included identifying the root causes and new patterns, making recommendations, giving technical assistance to States and advocating for ratification and implementation of child rights instruments.

NGO Group Executive Committee Elections

Members for re-election

Roberta Cecchetti, Alan Kikuchi-White, Peter Newell and Veronica Yates all stood for re-election in 2012. Each provided a brief presentation of their organisation and their work within the NGO Group. Roberta, Alan, Peter and Veronica were re-elected unanimously.

New members

Ileana Bello (Defence for Children International) and Conchi Ballesteros (Plataforma de Organizaciones de Infancia – Spain) presented their candidacies to become Executive Committee members. They were elected unanimously.

Presidential elections

Roberta Cecchetti was re-elected as President unanimously for a 2nd term.



2012 NGO Group General Assembly.

Departing members

Lennart Reinius (former President) and Ivanka Shalapatova stood down from the Executive Committee in 2012. The NGO Group thanks them warmly for their commitment and valuable work over the years and looks forward to on-going collaboration.

Membership Changes

The NGO Group warmly welcomes two new members admitted by the General Assembly in 2012: Child Soldiers International and Tanzania Child Rights Forum. They bring expertise on issues related to child soldiers and the OPAC, as well as the perspective of a national coalition which has been actively involved in advocating for child rights both at national and international level.

This year also saw organisations finishing their memberships: 3D Three→Trade, Human Rights, Equitable Democracy had ceased its operations, while Soroptimist International and Werkstatt Ökonomie no longer address issues related to the mandate of the NGO Group.

Changes in Working Groups

1. The Working Group on the Human Rights Council developed a new strategy to broaden its focus towards mainstreaming child rights beyond the work of the HRC. It therefore made a proposal to the General Assembly to change its name to Working Group on Mainstreaming. The proposal was approved unanimously.
2. A proposal for a new working group on birth registration was presented. The aim was to replace the informal advocacy group which was created a couple of years earlier to bridge the humanitarian and human rights agendas and to attract more NGO Group members. They were very involved with the HRC on a resolution on civil registration. The proposal to

establish a new Working Group on Birth Registration was approved unanimously.

3. The Working Group on Sexual Exploitation of Children had been inactive and the convenors officially asked to close it, as the relevant issues were already being covered under the other Working Groups and through the work of the Secretariat. The proposal to close the Working Group was approved unanimously.
4. The Working Group on the Communications Procedure decided to close down and become an international coalition for the ratification of the new OP (see page 14). The aim was to become more inclusive and involve other actors that do not traditionally work under the umbrella of the NGO Group. The coalition was officially launched in June 2012. The proposal to close the Working Group on the communications procedure was approved unanimously.

Mid-term review of the Strategic Plan

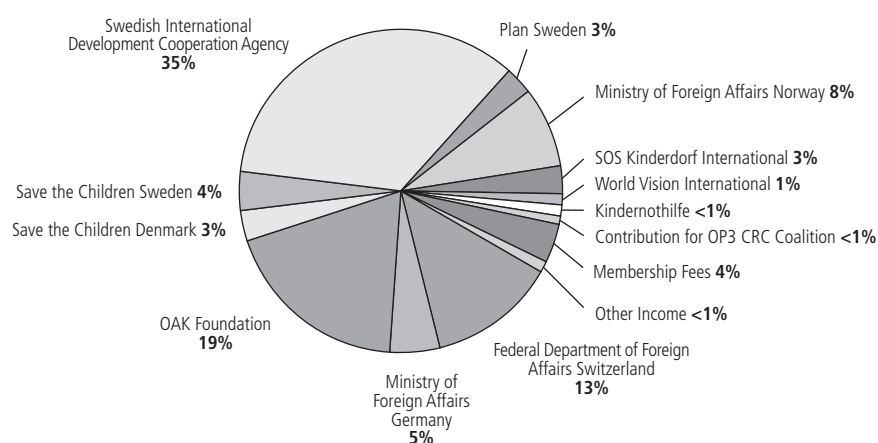
In 2012, the NGO Group was half way through its 5-year Strategic Plan and was well under way to achieve its strategic priorities, as illustrated in its recent mid-term review of the Strategic Plan. During the second half of this strategic period, the NGO Group will build on its achievements under each strategic priority and respond to new developments in child rights. It will also expand its work to include two areas, which were in the Strategic Plan, one as a guiding principle (i.e. maximising child participation), and the other as a basis to implement successfully the strategic priorities (i.e. strengthening the NGO Group). New activities will therefore be developed to:

1. Integrate and strengthen child participation in the work of the NGO Group, the Committee and relevant bodies.
2. Strengthen the NGO Group and the services it provides to national and international NGOs.

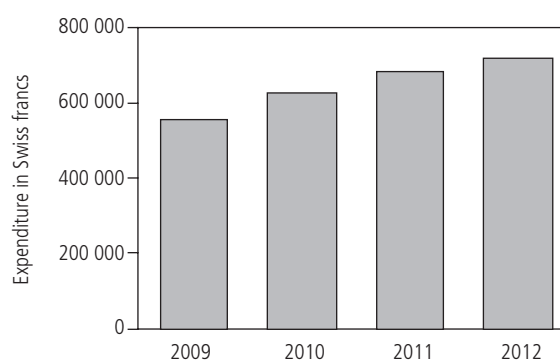
9. Accounts and funding

Funding partners and members extended their financial support of our work in 2012. Thanks to their continued and strengthened commitments, we were able to increase the scale of our work, both in terms of staff and programmes, to have a greater impact on child rights. The NGO Group sincerely thanks all of its donors for their support.

2012 Sources of funding



NGO Group expenditure, 2009–2012



2011 expenditures of the NGO Group

2012	Kindernothilfe	World Vision	CRC Coalition	Ministry of Foreign Affairs Germany	OAK Foundation	Plan International	Plan Sweden	Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs	Save the Children Denmark	Save the Children Sweden	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency	Federal Department of Foreign Affairs Switzerland	SOS Children's Villages International	Membership Fees	Other Income	TOTAL
Activities																
NGO participation in CRC/OPs reporting and training				29,309	6,011			59,178								94,499
Tools & research on CRC, child participation, follow-up to COs & UPR					1,725						12,354	7,956	5,982			28,016
Training on CRC reporting, HRC and UPR				6,563	5,016						2,292	2,302				16,173
OP3 CRC Coalition			1,296		287						400	376				2,359
Campaign for OP3 CRC – travel, training, tools & publications					35,621						3,638					39,259
NGO panelists for HCR annual day & expert meeting on health		8,865										300				9,165
Personnel and interns	4,500				94,810		20,461	4,525	23,841	27,035	173,655	57,782	15,592			422,201
Annual Report and rebranding process											2,913	1,385				4,298
Core costs																
Rent & office operational costs & staff development					106				3	20	43,337	14,979	311			58,755
Professional services (accountant, auditor, IT)											16,033	10,090	134			26,257
ExCo, GA & Working Groups' meetings & activities											3,741	2,261	1,976			7,978
Engagement with the Committee on the Rights of the Child											5,420	2,570				7,990
Total expenditure per donor in 2012	4,500	8,865	1,296	35,872	143,576	–	20,461	63,703	23,844	27,055	263,781	100,000	23,994	–	–	716,948
Total donor income for 2012	4,500	8,865	1,296	35,872	143,576	–	20,461	63,703	23,844	27,055	263,781	100,000	23,994	32,632	1,377	750,957
Income allocated to reserves*														32,632	1,377	34,009
Income earmarked for 2013		1,135			58,254	56,494										115,883
TOTAL DONOR INCOME	4,500	10,000	1,296	35,872	201,830	56,494	20,461	63,703	23,844	27,055	263,781	100,000	23,994	32,632	1,377	866,840

10. Structure and governance

The NGO Group consists of three organs, the most senior being the **General Assembly**, which meets annually, and is comprised of our member organisations. The **Executive Committee**, accountable to the General Assembly, provides strategic support, guidance, and oversight of the work of the NGO Group and its **Secretariat**. The latter is responsible for carrying out the daily work of the network, especially relating to reporting on the CRC and its Optional Protocols, mainstreaming child rights and the new Optional Protocol on a Communications Procedure.

To advance child rights within the international human rights system, NGO Group members join forces through our thematic Working Groups to address a particular child rights theme or issue.

In 2012, the Secretariat and Executive Committee consisted of:

Secretariat Staff

Lisa Myers – Director

Anita Goh – Advocacy Officer

Roisín Fegan – Child Rights Officer

Muriel Dreifuss Bisson – Administrative Officer

Tim Fieldsend – Fundraising and Communications Officer (until March)

Laura Collier – Communications Officer (since October)

Laure Elmaleh – Child Rights Assistant (since July)

Short-term Staff and freelance consultants

Maria Pia Bianchetti, Sabine Cazenave, Anne Crowley, Rowan Farrell, Alain Gross, Frances Sheahan, Natalia Starowicz and Laura Teytaz

Child/teen Consultants:⁶

Rossitsa Avramova, Agapedia Bulgaria; Gizem Gedik, *Voice of Children* radio programme



2012 NGO Group Secretariat Staff

of Bilgi University's Childhood Studies Unit's Children's Radio Programme Group; Vladimir Hristov and Nikolay Stoyanov, P.U.L.S. Foundation Bulgaria; Tuğba Küçükoğuz, ICC's Children's Advisory Group; Jessica Peters, Funky Dragon; Plamena Todorova.

Children of SHOKEI Gakuin Junior/senior high school

Children of ICC's Children's Advisory Group

Interns and Volunteers

Marijs Carrin, Rachel Ellis, Laure Elmaleh, Loretana Iacobelli, Victoria Jackson, Radoslava Karabasheva and Andrea Soley Junco

Executive Committee

Roberta Cecchetti – President
Save the Children International

Anne-Sophie Lois – Vice-President
PLAN International

Ileana Bello – Treasurer (since March)
Defence for Children International

Alan Kikuchi-White – Secretary
SOS Children's Villages International

Conchi Ballesteros (since March)
Plataforma de Organizaciones de Infancia

⁶ Names included with the consent of all consultants under 18 years of age.

Peter Newell

*APPROACH – Global Initiative to End All Corporal
Punishment of Children*

Lennart Reinius (until March)
Plan International

Ivanka Shalapatova (until March)
For Our Children Foundation

Veronica Yates
Child Rights International Network

Working Groups

Working Group on Children of Incarcerated
Parents

Working Group on Children without Parental
Care

Working Group on Children and Violence

Working Group on Indigenous Children

Working Group on Mainstreaming Child Rights

Working Group on Universal Birth Registration



11. NGO Group members

- 1: Action for Children and Youth Aotearoa (ACYA), New Zealand
- 2: African Child Policy Forum (ACPF), Ethiopia
- 3: Alliance for Children (Mauritius), Mauritius
- 4: Anti-Slavery International, United Kingdom
- 5: APPROACH Ltd. – Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, United Kingdom
- 6: Arigatou International, Switzerland
- 7: Associated Country Women of the World, United Kingdom
- 8: Association for Rural Development and Action Research (ARDAR), India
- 9: Association of Networks for Community Empowerment (ANCE), Pakistan
- 10: Baha'i International Community, USA
- 11: Child Helpline International, The Netherlands
- 12: Child Rights Information Network (CRIN), United Kingdom
- 13: Child Rights Network Switzerland (Netzwerk Kinderrechte Schweiz), Switzerland
- 14: Children's Rights Alliance, Ireland
- 15: Children's Rights Alliance for England (CRAE), United Kingdom
- 16: Child Soldiers International, Australia
- 17: Christian Children's Fund Inc, USA
- 18: Coalition Against Trafficking in Women International (CATW), Belgium
- 19: Consortium for Street Children, United Kingdom
- 20: Defence for Children International – DCI Costa Rica, Costa Rica
- 21: Defence for Children International (DCI), Switzerland
- 22: DevCon – An association for Rural Development, Pakistan
- 23: Education International, Belgium
- 24: Egyptian Foundation for Advancement of Childhood Conditions (EFACC), Egypt
- 25: End Child Prostitution Child Pornography and Trafficking (ECPAT International), Thailand
- 26: Eurochild, Belgium
- 27: European Association for Children in Hospital (EACH), Switzerland
- 28: EveryChild, United Kingdom
- 29: Fédération Internationale des Communautés Educatives (FICE International), Austria
- 30: First Nations Child and Family Caring society of Canada (FNCFS), Canada
- 31: Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC), Switzerland
- 32: Fundación Privada Intervida, Spain
- 33: Human Rights Watch, USA
- 34: Inter African Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women, Ethiopia
- 35: International Alliance of Women, France
- 36: International Association of Youth and Family Judges and Magistrates ((IAYFJM/AIMJF), Switzerland
- 37: International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN / GIFA), Switzerland
- 38: International Catholic Child Bureau (BICE), Switzerland
- 39: International Council of Jewish Women, Israel
- 40: International Council of Women, France
- 41: International Falcon Movement Socialist Education International., Belgium
- 42: International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW), Switzerland
- 43: International Foster Care Organisation (IFCO), Ireland
- 44: International Inner Wheel, United Kingdom
- 45: International Institute for Child Rights and Development, Canada

- 46: International Movement "ATD Fourth World", France
- 47: International Play Association: Promoting the Child's Right to Play, United Kingdom
- 48: International School Psychology Association (ISPA), USA
- 49: International Social Service, Switzerland
- 50: La Voix de l'Enfant, France
- 51: Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns, USA
- 52: National Aboriginal Islander Child Care (SNAICC), Australia
- 53: National Coalition for the Implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in Germany, Germany
- 54: Penal Reform International (PRI), United Kingdom
- 55: Plan International, United Kingdom
- 56: Plataforma de Organizaciones de Infancia, Spain
- 57: Proyecto Solidario, Spain
- 58: Red Latinamericana de Acogimiento (RELAF), Argentina
- 59: Red Latinamericana y Caribena por la Defensa de los niños, niñas y adolescentes (REDLAMYC), Uruguay
- 60: Resources Aimed at the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (RAPCAN), South Africa
- 61: ROC (The "Right of the Child" NGO), Russia
- 62: Roshni Homes Trust, Pakistan
- 63: Save the Children International, Switzerland
- 64: SOS Children's Villages International, Switzerland/ Austria
- 65 : Tanzania Child Rights Forum, Tanzania
- 66: Terre des Hommes International Federation, Switzerland
- 67: Together Scotland, United Kingdom
- 68: WAO – Afrique, Togo
- 69: War Child Holland, The Netherlands
- 70: Women's World Summit Foundation (WWSF), Switzerland
- 71: World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA), Malaysia
- 72: World Alliance of YMCAs, Switzerland
- 73: World Association Of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS), United Kingdom
- 74: World Jewish Congress, USA
- 75: Make Mothers Matter / Le Mouvement Mondial des Mères (MMM), France
- 76: World Organisation Against Torture / SOS Torture, Switzerland
- 77: World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations, France
- 78: World Vision International, USA
- 79: Young Men's Christian association of Costa Rica / Asociacion Cristiana de Jovenes, Costa Rica



12. Thanks

The NGO Group relies on the financial support of its donors and partners to run its programmes and support its objectives. We are grateful to the following donors for their support in 2012:

Governments

Germany
Norway
Sweden
Switzerland

Foundations

OAK Foundation

NGO Group and International Coalition Members

Kindernothilfe
Plan International
Plan Sweden
Save the Children Denmark
Save the Children Sweden
SOS Children's Villages International
Terre des Hommes
World Vision International
Membership fees

Participating in the production and editing of this report

Laura Collier
Lisa Myers

Concept and design

minimum graphics

Printing

Imprimerie Minute

The NGO Group envisions a world in which child 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:

NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child
UBS SA Vermont – Nations
17 Chemin Louis Dunant
1211 Geneva 20
Switzerland

For Swiss Francs and other currencies:

Account No. 279- 230010.01M
IBAN: CH55 0027 9279 2300 1001 M

For US Dollars:

Account No. 279-230010.60L
IBAN: CH55 0027 9279 2300 1060 L
BIC: UBSWCHZH80A

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

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