



CASE STUDIES

CHILDREN'S ENGAGEMENT IN CRC REPORTING

Together with children – for children A guide for non-governmental organizations
accompanying children in CRC reporting
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PREPARATION - Activities to engage children in the reporting process

The Get ready for Geneva project, England

Choosing a delegation to meet with the Committee

Children managing the Get ready for Geneva project ran a competition called Get yourself to Geneva. To enter, children had to be under 18 and living in England. They were asked what Article 12 (the right to have a say) meant to them – by writing a newspaper story, essay, letter or diary entry; sending in a podcast or short film; composing a song; drawing a comic strip; or sending in a photograph or drawing – with a caption – that showed Article 12 in practice. They also had to finish a sentence starting 'I want to visit the UN Committee so that I can...'. The entries were judged by children and by the Get ready project team. 12 children aged 9 to 17 were chosen. Extra money was given by other charities to support another 2 children to go to the Government examination in Geneva 3 months later and report back to children in England.

Meeting with the Committee

12 children from England met with the Committee in 2008. 10 of these children met with the Committee in a children-only meeting (see below), but 2 took part in the pre-session as part of the NGO delegation. To prepare, these children took part in a weekend residential in England with 10 adult members of the delegation. They learned more about the child rights issues that affect children in England (based on the findings of research carried out with over 1,700 children) and received training in public speaking. At the pre-session Nathan, 12, and Imogen, 17, gave presentations and answered the Committee's questions. One adult helped to explain difficult terms and what different laws and policies meant when they were referred to by the Committee or by NGOs.

Sending out the concluding observations

The Committee's concluding observations for the UK Government were published on 3 October 2008. On the same day, the Children's Rights Alliance for England wrote a version of the concluding 8 observations for children, so that all the children involved in the CRC reporting process could see the impact of their views. They were able to see that the 14 recommendations they had made to the Committee had been included in its final concluding observations. The children's version of the concluding observations was sent out by e-mail and post to children, NGOs, local councils, schools, the government, and the Children's Commissioner, and was also posted online on the Get ready for Geneva website. Children have continued to work to monitor the government's progress towards putting the concluding observations into practice, especially in relation to the recommendations children made about their rights. It has published these reports on the Get ready website.

Children's Rights Alliance for England (CRAE)

CASE STUDY: Gathering evidence on children's rights, Scotland

Article 12 in Scotland is a youth-led network of organizations that work to promote children's participation and information rights as set out in international human rights law. In 2008, Article 12 in Scotland published *I Witness: The UNCRC in Scotland*, the aim of which was to highlight – and present solutions to – the emerging issues relating to the implementation of the CRC from a child's point of view. To develop the report, Article 12 in Scotland consulted widely, over a two-year period, with partner organizations and others representing a range of geographical areas and social groups, to find out how children viewed their rights and well-being. Key themes were identified that represented the most common issues, concerns and solutions. These included discrimination against children from gypsy and traveller communities, discrimination against new immigrants to Scotland, limited opportunities for children to participate in decision-making, the treatment of refugee and asylum-seeking children, children's relationships with their families, access to focused health services for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender young people, support for those with eating disorders; awareness of the CRC; and negative attitudes towards children in care. The data gained from the consultations illustrated the views and opinions of over 8,000 children and young people in Scotland from the age of four.

Article 12 in Scotland

SUBMISSION OF A CHILDREN'S REPORT

CASE STUDY: Writing a report for the Committee, Netherlands

The Dutch National Youth Council is a member of the Dutch Coalition on Children's Rights. The Youth Council was involved in the process of preparing the NGO report to the Committee and it was also responsible for the separate children/youth report. In consultation with a broad range of organizations working on children's rights the issues that were to be included in the NGO report were determined, and guidelines for reporting to the Committee shared. Following this, the Youth Council prepared a proposal for writing the youth report, including information about the groups of children that would be involved and the different issues that the report might cover. Once the proposal was evaluated and agreed by the Dutch Coalition on Children's Rights work by the Youth Council began: appointing young writers, contacting different youth groups, setting up and undertaking interviews, and formulating conclusions. There were always two contact people at the Youth Council – one representing the Youth Council at the Dutch Coalition on Children's Rights and another responsible for the youth report. The Dutch Coalition on Children's Rights supported children to write the report by providing information on the CRC or on the Dutch legal system, but did not interfere in the writing process or with the content of the report. The children from the Youth Council benefited from the support, experience and knowledge of adults from the Coalition. Their involvement was based on their independence from and equality with, the Coalition. One partner represented the children and the other, the adult society.

Defence for Children – ECPAT Nederland

CASE STUDY: Writing a report for the Committee, England

The Get ready for Geneva project supported children between the ages of six and eighteen to gather evidence in a nationwide, children's rights investigation with over 1,700 of their peers in 2007. There were 1,362 completed online surveys and 3,000 pages of transcripts from focus group interviews. Children leading the Get ready project received training and analysed the findings from the surveys. They used quotes from the focus group interviews to back up the findings in their report. Fourteen children volunteered to sit on a drafting committee. They were each responsible for writing different sections of the report – which contained chapters on respect and freedom, friends and family, health and safety, education, play and leisure, and crime – based on the analysis already done by their peers. They chose to illustrate the report with photographs taken throughout the course of the project and with drawings done by younger children to demonstrate their human rights concerns. The drafting committee met briefly before the submission of the report to the Committee to agree on the design of the report and to formulate their own recommendations – 14 things that they wanted the Committee to include in its concluding observations for the UK Government. A fuller version of the research findings was published in a later report written by CRAE staff and overseen by children – What do they know? The human rights concerns of children and young people in England.

Children's Rights Alliance for England

CASE STUDY: Selecting a delegation to meet with the Committee, Hong Kong

It was important to ensure that children had the opportunity to speak directly with the Committee to provide first-hand information and observations from their unique perspective. To enable children to contribute meaningfully, it was important that they took part in the CRC reporting process from the very beginning. The Hong Kong Committee on Children's Rights obtained sufficient funding to support two child delegates to travel to Geneva to meet with the Committee during the pre-session. To ensure that the process was genuinely participatory, the children that prepared the children's report for the Committee were supported to select their own representatives. They met to discuss and decide the rules for election and the criteria for selecting their own delegates. Concerns on gender, age, equal opportunities, commitment and the language barrier were all discussed by children. A ballot paper was designed that took these concerns into account, and the NGO distributed these to all eligible young voters. A 15 year-old boy and a 19 year-old girl were chosen to represent children from Hong Kong in Geneva. The delegates actively participated in all events relating to the reporting process both in Hong Kong and Geneva, including press conferences, the pre-session working group, and a children's meeting following the pre-session. Giving children the opportunity to select their own representatives gave them a mandate from their peers to share children's views and experiences with the Committee. One of the child delegates, now an adult, continues to support children to engage in the CRC reporting process.

Hong Kong Committee on Children's Rights

CASE STUDY: Taking part in the pre-session, United Kingdom

During the UK pre-session in 2008, children from England, Scotland and Wales formed part of the NGO delegation to the Committee. It was important to NGOs to give up places on their delegations to children, so that their voices could be heard as part of the formal reporting process, as well as through a children's meeting with the Committee (which took place later in the day with a larger delegation of children). The youngest child taking part in the formal UK NGO delegation was 12 years old. Children prepared for their participation in the pre-session prior to travelling to Geneva, through separate weekend residentials with other delegation members in their own countries. This included writing their presentations and familiarising themselves with the issues raised by children in their reports to the Committee. The delegation members also all came together in Geneva the night before the pre-session to give them the opportunity to get to know one another. During the pre-session, children gave presentations about the key children's rights issues in the UK and answered questions from the Committee alongside NGO representatives and the Children's Commissioners. An adult supported child throughout the meeting by explaining the context of different legislation and policy being discussed; she was also on hand to answer any questions or deal with any concerns that they had during the course of the meeting. Following the pre-session, children said that although the discussions had been challenging to follow at times, it was important for them to be in the room, contributing to the debate and answering questions raised by the Committee. They felt that it was important for the Committee to hear their perspectives and lived experiences alongside the legislation, policy and research-based analytical answers given by NGOs.

Children's Rights Alliance for England

CASE STUDY: Preparing children for the meeting with the Committee, Kenya

The four young delegates selected by their peers to represent the views of children in Kenya had not travelled out of the country before. The NGO supporting them felt it was important to ensure that they were very well briefed, not only on different aspects of the reporting process but also, on what to expect when they arrived in Geneva. Training in public speaking and a familiarisation visit to the Palais Wilson prior to meeting with the Committee helped to build the confidence of the young delegates. An hour-long meeting took place between the young delegates and the Committee. Other adults were not present in order to give children the opportunity to lead the meeting and to focus on the issues that were of most concern to them. Each young delegate was asked to lead on a particular theme. The themes were chosen by children following a national meeting with key policy-makers in Kenya, and focused on: HIV/AIDS, the needs of children from rural communities, street children, and the needs of children in institutions. The young delegates each gave a short presentation about their theme (of which they had personal experience as well as representing the views of others) and answered questions from Committee members. Following the meeting, the young delegates participated as observers in the pre-session working group.

Kenyan Alliance for the Advancement of Children (KAACR)

CASE STUDY: A Rapporteur visit to Wales

The Rapporteur visit to Wales took place after the pre-session and prior to the State party examination in Geneva. During the pre-session in Geneva, members of Funky Dragon (the children and young people's assembly for Wales) met their Country Rapporteur for the first time. She had been invited to visit Wales by the Welsh Children's Commissioner, for three days. For her forthcoming visit, the Rapporteur expressed an interest in having a chance to see how children really lived in Wales. With this in mind, members of Funky Dragon invited the Rapporteur to meet with them in the 3G's Project, in Gurnos Estate, in Merthyr Tydfil. This is one of Europe's largest social housing estates and one of Wales' most deprived areas with high levels of unemployment and sickness. The 3G's Project is a haven for children and has provided many members of Funky Dragon over the years. At 3G's, the Rapporteur met with the members of Funky Dragon and other children from the local area. They discussed the findings of Funky Dragon's research with the children, and the Rapporteur heard about how the findings related to children's day-to-day lives. After a formal meeting and discussion, she was invited by children for an exploratory walk around the estate. In true Welsh fashion the skies opened and rain poured down. All credit to our Rapporteur, as she put on her coat and picked up her umbrella to accompany children in a walk around the area where they lived. After the walk, we all sought the warm dry sanctuary of a local pizza restaurant where conversations continued late into the night. The next afternoon we met again in the Welsh Assembly shiny buildings for formal speeches from Wales' First Minister Rhodri Morgan, the Children's Commissioner for Wales, and from the Rapporteur. During her speech, she thanked the children from Funky Dragon for arranging her visit – she had obviously enjoyed her trip up the Valleys!

Funky Dragon

CASE STUDY: Disseminating the concluding observations, Peru

Further to their participation in the CRC reporting process in 2005, children from REDNNA Peru – the national network of children from Peru – felt that it was important to disseminate the concluding observations throughout the country. This process was carried out over the space of a year and was an immense joint effort by children from diverse backgrounds including members of school councils, working children, children without parental care, indigenous children, and uniformed organizations, supported by child rights NGOs. Versions of the concluding observations were created for children both in Spanish and in Quechua. 21 public events were carried out all over Peru. Children presented the Committee’s concluding observations, and using age- and culturally-appropriate materials and methodologies showed participants how the concluding observations related to the reality of children’s lives. Children had the opportunity to analyse and debate the concluding observations with representatives of local authorities, develop solutions to some of the issues raised and encourage their commitment to implementing the concluding observations. Ensuring continuity was important, so national events were carried out also in Lima to raise awareness of the concluding observations among government officials and civil society. A Vice Chair of the Committee was invited by child-led organizations to visit Peru and participate in the dissemination of the concluding observations. Children from many different regions and cultures presented a legislative proposal to members of Congress, obliging the Peruvian government to fully implement all the recommendations made by the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Save the Children Sweden: Latin America and the Caribbean

Monitoring the implementation of the concluding observations, England

Since 2002, in the annual State of children's rights in England report, CRAE analyses legislation, policy, statistical and practical research, conclusions from human rights and parliamentary monitoring bodies, court judgments, and research on children's views and experiences, in order to determine the progress the government has made against each of the Committee's recommendations. In 2009, with a new set of concluding observations, CRAE worked with children to create a children's version of the annual monitoring report, in order to support them to learn about children's human rights and to campaign for change in England. This is part of an ongoing programme to support children's activism and their own human rights campaigns on issues that concern them. By reviewing the findings from the children's rights investigation they undertook for the Committee in 2007 and taking into account the Committee's concluding observations, children began work in late 2008 on three campaigns: looking at the right to education for refugee and asylum-seeking children, the discrimination against children by the media, and the need for better mental health support for children in schools.

Children's Rights Alliance for England