



# Handbook for Adults Participating in the Pre-Session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child

**Child Rights Connect**

1, rue de Varembe, 1202 Geneva, Switzerland - Tel: +41 22 552 41 30 - Fax: +41 22 552 41 39 - Skype: childrights1

Email: [crcreporting@childrightsconnect.org](mailto:crcreporting@childrightsconnect.org) Website: [www.childrightsconnect.org](http://www.childrightsconnect.org)

Mini site: <http://crcreporting.childrightsconnect.org>

## About Child Rights Connect

**Child Rights Connect is an international network of non-governmental organisations (NGOs)** that advocates for children’s enjoyment of their rights and empowers children’s rights defenders, including children, NGOs, national human rights institutions (NHRIs) and Ombudspersons, to engage effectively with the Committee on the Rights of the Child (the Committee).

Since our creation more than 30 years ago, we have assisted and supported children’s rights defenders from all countries of the world to use the Committee’s work to make change happen on the ground for children. Our longstanding experience and unique partnership with the Committee and its Secretariat, which is part of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), has made us their focal point for the participation of children’s rights defenders in the Committee’s work.

## How to use this Handbook

This Handbook has been developed by Child Rights Connect to assist those invited to participate to the pre-session of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

It contains practical information to be well prepared for the pre-session for each step of the process and how action can be taken.

This Handbook complements the information you can find on our mini site on the Committee’s reporting cycle at: <http://crcreporting.childrightsconnect.org/> and the practical information shared in our **Handbook for Children Participating in the Pre-Session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child**.

## Tell us what you think about this Handbook

We would very much appreciate any comment you might have on this Handbook. We would particularly like to know how you have used it, what you found most helpful and what you feel is missing so that we can improve it for others.

Please send your comments to: [crcreporting@childrightsconnect.org](mailto:crcreporting@childrightsconnect.org)

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 **CONTACT US!**

If you have any question or need additional guidance to ensure child participation in the Committee’s reporting cycle, please contact us:

- via email at: [crcreporting@childrightsconnect.org](mailto:crcreporting@childrightsconnect.org)
- via Skype: username: childrights1
- by phone: landline: +41 22 552 41 30
- via WhatsApp. Child Rights Connect mobile number is shared upon request.

## Introduction - What is the Pre-Session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child?

The pre-session, or pre-sessional working group, is the week during which the Committee meets in private with selected children's rights defenders, including children, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), Ombudspersons, as well as UN agencies, **in Geneva, Switzerland**. During a pre-session week, several country pre-sessions are held one after another.

The country pre-sessions are scheduled when the Committee receives a new State report. The Committee meets 3 times a year for 4 weeks each time. The first three weeks are the session and the fourth one is the pre-session of the following session. The dates of the pre-session week are published on the [Committee's webpage](#). The exact date and time of a country pre-session are **CONFIDENTIAL** and are communicated to the selected participants only. The country pre-session takes place 6 months in advance to the related session.

A country pre-session is a 2.5-hour confidential meeting where all 18 Committee members<sup>1</sup> meet with selected children's rights defenders invited by the Committee and UN agencies representatives, like UNICEF.

It is an opportunity for children's rights defenders to confidentially share their information and concerns before the Committee's dialogue with the State – the session.



**Before and after each country pre-session, Child Rights Connect organises briefings and debriefings for children's rights defenders to provide any last-minute update to the participants, address any pending question, concern or issue and discuss advocacy strategies.**

Briefings are usually held either the evening before the country pre-session, or 1 hour before the meeting and debriefings right after the country pre-session. We will confirm the times as soon as we get the final schedule of the Committee.

**! Please keep this in mind when you organise your travel to Geneva.**

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<sup>1</sup> Unless the Committee decides to hold the pre-session week in double chambers, in which case only 9 Committee members will attend each country pre-session.

## Respecting the Confidentiality of the Pre-Session

### Why is it essential to preserve the confidentiality of the meetings with the Committee?

The principle of **confidentiality** constitutes one of the key components of the working methods of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, as country pre-sessions are closed meetings, not open to the public.

Its objective is to ensure the meaningful and safe participation of national actors, including children, to its meetings by enhancing freedom of expression and protection from reprisals.

**Confidentiality should be respected with regard to ALL MEETINGS organised with the Committee during the pre-session week: FOR YOUR SAFETY AND THE SAFETY OF OTHERS involved.**

**!** Be aware that some children's rights defenders participating to the same country pre-session as you or to another meeting taking place before or after yours, **could be at risk if their presence was known to others**. They engage with the Committee on the Rights of the child because of the confidentiality of its meetings, please respect their needs.

**!** Children are more vulnerable and may not fully realise the risks and consequences of not following the principle of confidentiality for themselves and for others. It is essential that this is clearly explained to them in advance of a meeting with the Committee and reiterated just after the meeting.

### WHAT MUST REMAIN ABSOLUTELY CONFIDENTIAL

- ✓ The names of the **participants/organisations** attending a country pre-session or a children's meeting with the Committee must not be disclosed. Only selected children's rights defenders are invited to the pre-session and no observer is allowed in the room.
- ✓ The **content of the discussion** during a country pre-session or a children's meeting cannot be mentioned or shared. You can say what points you raised, but you **CANNOT** make any reference to what has been said by other people, including Committee members. NO participant to those meetings, including the Committee, NGOs, NHRIs, UN agencies, and children can mention **what is said and discussed** during the meeting. There are no public minutes or recordings of the meetings.
- ✓ The **date and time of a country pre-session or children's meeting** must NOT be disclosed or shared. While the dates of the week of the pre-session is public information that can be found on the OHCHR website, the exact dates of each country pre-session – which could indicate when children's rights defenders from which countries will be in Geneva – are strictly confidential.

## What can children’s rights defenders decide to make public?

- You decide *if* and *when* you want to make your alternative report public. You can also decide if you want to provide the government concerned with a copy of your report. If children contributed to the alternative report, they should be consulted before the report is made public and, in any case, anonymised.
- You decide if you want your alternative report to be uploaded on the OHCHR website after the pre-session when you submit it to the Committee. If you decide to make it public later, or if you would like to make another version public, you can send this public version directly to the Committee’s Secretariat at [crc@ohchr.org](mailto:crc@ohchr.org) right after the country pre-session specifying that it is for upload on the OHCHR website.

## Confidentiality: DOs and DON'Ts

DOs	DON'Ts
<p>Keep the information heard during a country pre-session or a children’s meeting confidential.</p>	<p>Do not publicise or share the names of other participants (individuals/organisations) of a country pre-session or a children’s meeting</p>
<p>Only share on internet/social media the topics and issues you raised during the country pre-session or the children’s meeting AFTER the pre-session week.</p> <p>Only make reference to your own report.</p>	<p>Do not publicise what has been said during the pre-session by other participants, including Committee members.</p> <p>NEVER share your topics/issues live as this would indicate the date of the country pre-session or children’s meeting.</p>
<p>Explain the principle of confidentiality to your colleagues and to the children you support and accompany.</p> <p>Make sure they understand what it means and the importance of respecting confidentiality for their safety and the safety of others.</p>	<p>Do not take pictures during the meeting.</p> <p>Do not take pictures of other participants outside of the meeting without asking for their prior authorisation.</p> <p>Do not take pictures of children participants without asking the children, getting their chaperones’ consent and informing them about how you will use the pictures and possible implications.</p>
<p>Write ‘Confidential’ on all the pages of your report submitted confidentially.</p>	<p>NEVER invite journalists to a country pre-session or a children’s meeting or to meet in the premises of such meetings before or after.</p> <p>NEVER disclose the dates of a specific country pre-session or children’s meetings outside your own organisation (and for internal purposes).</p>

## What to do if you fear reprisals for your engagement with the Committee?

Respecting the confidentiality of the pre-session is essential to protect you as well as other participants from reprisals, such as intimidation, harassment, discrimination.

**!** Never assume that if you do not fear reprisals, this is the case of all other participants to country pre-sessions.

As the political context of each country varies, it is very important **not to disclose the dates of other country pre-sessions or the name of participants from other countries you might have met while in Geneva, or with whom you were in contact during the preparation to the pre-session.**

**If you feel concerned** about possible forms of reprisals relating to your participation in a country pre-session, please inform Ms. Allegra Franchetti ([afranchetti@ohchr.org](mailto:afranchetti@ohchr.org)), the Secretary of the Committee and us ([crcreporting@childrightsconnect.org](mailto:crcreporting@childrightsconnect.org)) as soon as possible.

**If you experience reprisals after your participation** to a country pre-session, know that the Committee, along with all other UN treaty bodies, has developed a series of guidelines to “assist and protect individuals and groups alleging that they have been the object of intimidation or reprisals for seeking to cooperate or cooperating with them”.

In this context, the Committee has appointed **Ms. Renate Winter**, the Committee member from Austria, as its Rapporteur on the issue of reprisals. She is in charge of assessing your situation and decide how the Committee should react.

You can find more information about the safety of Human Rights Defenders in Geneva, protection and reporting of reprisals on the NGO Welcome Desk [website](#).

**!** Please read the [Guide against Intimidations or Reprisals](#) (San José Guidelines) to have more details on the role of the UN Treaty Bodies in this subject.

### Contact Details of the Committee’s Secretariat:

**Committee on the Rights of the Child**  
Human Rights Treaties Division (HRTD)  
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner  
for Human Rights (OHCHR)

UNOG-OHCHR  
CH-1211 Geneva 10 (Switzerland)

Tel.: +41 22 917 91 41

Fax: +41 22 917 90 08

E-mail: [crc@ohchr.org](mailto:crc@ohchr.org)

## Registering to the Pre-Session

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### I. Selection of Representatives of Organisations to the Pre-Session

Your organisation was invited by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (the Committee) to participate in a country pre-session of the Committee: if you want to participate, you need to select representatives.

In order to make the best selection of your representatives, please keep the following points in mind:

#### Number of participants

Given the confidential and interactive nature of the meeting, the Committee usually invites only a small group of civil society representatives per country pre-session (about 12 participants).

Based on our experience, organisations that have submitted a comprehensive report on a broad number of issues should register 2 people. 1 person is sufficient to represent an organisation that has submitted a thematic report.

#### Selection criteria

The Committee requires participants to:

- ✓ Be **fluent** (understanding and speaking) in one of the United Nations official languages, namely English, French, Spanish, Russian, Chinese or Arabic;
- ✓ Have been **actively involved** in the preparation of the alternative report submitted by the organisation;
- ✓ Be ready to **actively participate** and answer the questions asked by the Committee (no observers are allowed);
- ✓ Have **extensive knowledge** of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and its Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (OPSC) and/or the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict (OPAC), if relevant, and how they are implemented in the country, especially with regard to the national legislation, government policies and programmes and the priority areas and major gaps;
- ✓ Be **willing to collaborate** with other representatives in the room (e.g. UNICEF, Ombudsman, etc.);
- ✓ **Commit to the confidentiality** principle.

! If you select 2 representatives for your organisation, they should have complementary expertise to cover a broader range of topics.



## II. Online Registration of Organisations to the Pre-Session

Registration of representatives participating in the pre-session is done through our [online registration form](#). This means that the contact details of all selected representatives for each organisation invited to a country pre-session need to be registered at once. Please send only one form per representative.

Organisations which do not register online by the set deadline will need to contact the Committee's Secretariat directly ([crc@ohchr.org](mailto:crc@ohchr.org)) to see if a late registration is possible.

**!** At this stage, we recommend that organisations who may attend depending on funding register anyway, even if funding has not yet been secured (see the section "Funding Possibilities of Child Rights Connect" below).

### Designating a main representative and contact person:

Each organisation registering will be asked to provide the name of one main representative, who will also act as the contact person for Child Rights Connect and the Committee's Secretariat in the preparation of the country pre-session.

The main representative will be expected to:

- ✓ Disseminate any information shared by Child Rights Connect and/or the Committee's Secretariat with colleagues participating to the country pre-session and
- ✓ Participate to the preparatory Skype call that Child Rights Connect organises for all main representatives of organisations participating country pre-sessions.

For coordination purposes, the contact details of this person will be shared with the other main representatives of the organisations participating in the same country pre-session. If this is a problem, please contact us at [crcreporting@childrightsconnect.org](mailto:crcreporting@childrightsconnect.org)

## III. Funding Possibilities of Child Rights Connect

Child Rights Connect has secured limited funding for organisations invited by the Committee which cannot fully cover their costs to come to Geneva.

If your organisation fulfils the criteria listed below, you can apply for funding directly through our [online registration form](#).

### Who can receive funding to attend a country pre-session?

To be eligible for Child Rights Connect's funding by, **your organisation must:**

- ✓ Be an NGO or a coalition of NGOs;
- ✓ Have been invited by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child to attend a country pre-session;
- ✓ Have undertaken efforts to raise funds to participate to the country pre-session previously;
- ✓ Have failed to raise funds covering the full costs of the participation of its selected representative(s) to the country pre-session.

The organisation must identify in the funding application which representative(s) request funding for and why.

## How does Child Rights Connect decide?

The decision to provide full or partial funding is taken based on the information contained in your funding application and on the attendance of other civil society representatives to the country pre-session with their own funds.

Child Rights Connect will inform all applicants about its decision at the latest two weeks after the application deadline.

## What is covered by Child Rights Connect funding?

**Full funding** includes:

- 1) Travel costs to Geneva: round-trip economy class ticket (flight or train), visa fees and visa-related costs; and
- 2) Board and lodging: accommodation in a hotel in Geneva and a 50 CHF (~50 USD) allowance per full day of stay within the funded period.

**No other expenses will be covered.**

**Partial funding** includes selected items listed above, depending on the funds the applicant was already able to raise.

## IV. Accreditation to enter the UN buildings

Once you have registered representative(s) of your organisation online, you must submit a request to get accredited to enter the UN building where the Committee will meet with you.

**!** Failing to do so will prevent you from accessing the building and attending your country pre-session.

Accreditation to the UN is done in 2 steps:

- 1) Before the country pre-session:
  - ✓ Participants must register through the unique OHCHR online platform for accreditation. The link will be provided to the invited participants by email, together with the invitation. Kindly allow two working days for your request to be processed.
- 2) On the day of the country pre-session:
  - ✓ Go to the security gate of Palais Wilson (street address: 52 rue des Pâquis, 1201 Geneva, Switzerland) where the country pre-session will take place.
  - ✓ Bring the confirmation of registration which includes the QR code and your passport or your ID card.

## Preparing for the Pre-Session

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### I. The structure of the country pre-session

A country pre-session is a 2.5 hours confidential meeting between the Committee members and selected participants from civil society, and it is divided in **4 main parts**:

- 1) Introductory oral statements by the participants** - Participants invited by the Committee make short oral statements.
- 2) Round of questions by the Committee** - The Committee's country rapporteurs (2 members) or task force (3-4 members) ask a series of questions to the participants, which are not limited to the issues raised in their reports or oral statements.
- 3) Preparation and organisation of the answers** – Participants have 15 minutes in total to prepare their answers to the questions asked by Committee members. They can decide on the order they will use to answer the questions, who will answer which question and if there are questions they do not want to answer. It is strongly encouraged that all participants work together to divide up the answers amongst themselves.
- 4) Interactive dialogue with the Committee** – Once the preparation time is over, participants are given the floor to answer the Committee's questions. Committee members can intervene at any point with additional or follow-up questions.

#### *Country Rapporteurs and Task Force*

For each country pre-session, the Committee appoints either **2 country rapporteurs** or **1 task force made of 3-4 members**.

Appointments are made at the end of the previous session, about 3 months before the country pre-session. Both the country rapporteurs and the task force have the mandate to lead the dialogues with children's rights defenders during the country pre-session and the State reviewed during the country session.

When a task force leads a country pre-session, the Committee Chair may limit the number of questions raised by other members during the round of questions to children's rights defenders.

 Child Rights Connect will let you know who the country rapporteurs/task force members are as soon as we get the information.

## II. How to effectively engage in the pre-session?

Given the format and length of the pre-session, it is essential for participants to each country pre-session to coordinate beforehand to ensure effective time management and avoid duplication of issues and answers.

### Advantages of coordination:

- ✓ All participants know each other before the country pre-session;
- ✓ All oral statements are shared beforehand so that participants know what issues others plan to raise and the areas of expertise of each participant;
- ✓ Introductory oral statements of participants are not repetitive and are kept to their shortest, which allows more time for questions and answers with the Committee;
- ✓ Participants know which topics or themes they will cover and are able to prepare in advance;
- ✓ Participants manage to answer most, if not all, of the questions asked by the Committee despite the short time available for preparation during the meeting;
- ✓ This coordination for the country pre-session will serve further coordination at the time of the session and follow-up to the Committee's recommendations.

## III. How to Prepare your Introductory Oral Statement?

Country pre-sessions start with short introductory oral statements from NGOs, NHRIs, UNICEF and other non-governmental bodies. While there is no specific format for these introductory remarks, the following points provide some guidance on how to present information in an effective way.

### Content of the statement

- ✓ Focus on a limited number of key priority issues, updates and recommendations to help the Committee understand better the main challenges in your country.
- ✓ If there are relevant general issues that affect the implementation of the Convention (CRC) and/or its Optional Protocols (OPs), please mention them briefly.
- ✓ You can give your opinion on the State party report and provide updated information since the submission of your report.
- ✓ You can refer to the content of your report but there is no need to summarize your report and go into too much detail since the Committee will have already studied your report.

! Please note that the Committee members will have been provided with electronic and hard copies of your reports: you do not need to bring hard copies of your report.

- ✓ You can conclude your statement with a summary of key recommendations and issues that you want the Committee to raise with the State party during the country session.
- ✓ Your oral statement should not provide information about the work of your organisation. If you nevertheless wish to share such information, you can distribute it in writing to the members of the Committee.



Child Rights Connect is happy to comment on your draft presentations.

## Speaking rules

- ✓ The Committee Secretariat decides on the speaking time and the order of speakers for NGO introductory statements as well as for NHRIs and children.
- ✓ The total speaking time for NGOs during a country pre-session on the CRC is about 15 minutes. In case of initial or integrated reports on the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (OPSC) and/or the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, more time will be allocated by the Secretariat.
- ✓ If there is more than one NGO/coalition attending, the total speaking time will be divided between the different organisations. NGOs/coalitions can either prepare a joint statement with one or more speakers, or prepare shorter separate ones.
- ✓ The NGOs/coalitions speak first, followed by NHRIs and UN agencies. UNICEF and other UN agencies will also be allocated speaking time by the Committee Secretariat.
- ✓ Statements should be made in English, French or Spanish. You can also prepare your statement in Russian, Arabic or Chinese, but you will have to let the CRC Secretariat know well in advance so they can organise for interpretation.

! It is important to keep within the time limit to allow enough time for the questions and answers.

! The time allocated to each organisation might vary according to the total number of organisations participating.

After receiving a confirmation of how much time you will have to make your introductory statement, the main representative of your organisation will have to inform the Committee Secretariat about who from your organisation will take the floor to deliver the statement.

In this respect, the main representative of your organisation will have to contact the person below:

- ✓ James Boit, Secretariat of the Committee ([jboit@ohchr.org](mailto:jboit@ohchr.org)).
- ✓ Please, put us ([crcreporting@childrightsconnect.org](mailto:crcreporting@childrightsconnect.org)) in copy of your email, so that we can be aware.
- ✓

## Practical Information

- ✓ Bring **8 copies of your statement** for the interpreters and country rapporteurs. If you want all Committee members to have a copy of your statement, please bring 24 copies.  
Child Rights Connect does not have offices in the UN building where the pre-session takes place: we cannot help you print or copy statements on the day of the meeting.
- ✓ There are no power point facilities in the conference room. If you want to use a power point format, please provide paper copies to the Committee and interpreters.

## IV. How to Prepare for the Interactive Dialogue with the Committee?

After the round of questions by the Committee, you will be given a **15-minute break** to decide how to answer the questions.

In order to make the most efficient use of this time, we recommend you to:

- ✓ Note down all the questions on a paper or laptop;
- ✓ Coordinate in advance with your colleagues and/or other participants of the pre-session (*i.e.* other NGOs, UNICEF, NHRIs) to avoid overlaps and repetitions;
- ✓ Consider asking one person to be in charge of time management, especially if you are a large group;
- ✓ Group the questions into subjects and prioritise the subjects by their importance.
- ✓ Prioritise the questions you want to give an answer to. Given the time available, it may not be possible to give an answer to all questions posed by the Committee: it is up to you to decide which questions you think need to be answered during the meeting and which could be answered in writing afterwards.

Be concise and focused when you answer keeping in mind that the longer you spend on answering one question, the less questions you can answer, but also that it may be better to answer some key questions comprehensively than all questions superficially.

**!** It is important that you **keep to the essentials, be as brief and organised as possible.**

- ✓ **Please note** that questions about the CRC will be asked first, followed by those on OPAC and/or OPSC, when relevant.

If you have statistics, reports or information, which do not come from UN reports (*i.e.* UNICEF, ILO and WHO statistics), that support the issues that you will emphasise during the meeting, please share them with the Committee Secretariat and ask that they are distributed to the Committee members at the beginning of the meeting. Any information about publications or campaigns prepared by NGOs, children and NHRIs to disseminate the CRC would also be useful as the Committee often encourages States parties to support such civil society campaigns.

## Annex – Background Information on Committee Members

To better prepare for the pre-session, here is a general overview of who the Committee members are and what their background is. This will help you have an idea of the main areas of expertise of Committee members and therefore what to expect from them in terms of questions.

The Committee is made of 18 independent experts on child rights from 18 different countries. It is important to keep in mind that **Committee members are elected in their personal capacity** for a four-year term and can be re-elected.<sup>2</sup>

The current composition of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, as well as information on the members' background, can be found here:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CRC/Pages/Membership.aspx>

**!** All Committee's sessions with States are public and webcasted. If you want to get a sense of the questions asked by the Committee, check the [UN Web TV archives](#).

All Committee members are experts in different subjects related to the rights of children, who tend to ask questions in line with their expertise and interests.



Child Rights Connect mapped **the questions that Committee members most frequently ask States and the thematic areas they usually cover** during country sessions.

We hope that this information can help you to:

- Better understand the Committee's perspective and areas of interest;
- Better prepare for the country pre-session;
- Provide the Committee with more relevant and targeted inputs (recommendations, suggested questions for the State).

**!** **Please note** that the information included in this section is not meant to be comprehensive and has been drafted solely by Child Rights Connect for informative purposes.

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<sup>2</sup> For more information on Committee members' nomination and election, check our fact sheet at : [http://www.childrightsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Fact-sheet-CRC-Elections\\_ChildRightsConnect\\_-English.pdf](http://www.childrightsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Fact-sheet-CRC-Elections_ChildRightsConnect_-English.pdf)

## Thematic issues frequently raised by Committee members

Committee Members	Issues
<i>Suzanne AHO ASSOUMA</i>	Birth registration, child trafficking, adoption, health, maternal health, primary health care services, sexual education, early pregnancy.
<i>Amal Salman ALDOSERI</i>	Laws and policies, dissemination of CRC, corporal punishment, child labour, right to play and leisure activities, harmful practices.
<i>Hynd AYOUBI IDRISSI</i>	Budget, laws and policies, CRC in national legislation, data collection, cooperation between UNICEF-civil society-government, best interest of the child, corporal punishment, child victims of violence, child trafficking, corporal punishment in schools, juvenile justice, domestic violence
<i>Jorge CARDONA LLORENS</i>	Ombudsman, harmful practices, children with disabilities, inclusive education.
<i>Bernard GASTAUD</i>	The dissemination of the CRC, vulnerable groups of children, birth registration, street children, definition of the child.
<i>Olga KHAZOVA</i>	Best interest of the child, adoption, education regarding child rights, behavioural problems, family law, institutional care, parental responsibility.
<i>Hatem KOTRANE</i>	Laws and policies, nationality, birth registration, abortion, child labour, juvenile justice, OPSC.
<i>Cephas LUMINA</i>	Health, inclusive education, children with disabilities.
<i>Gehad MADI</i>	Juvenile justice, children involved in armed conflict, racial discrimination, OPSC and OPAC.
<i>Benyam Dawit MEZMUR</i>	Child victims of abuse, quality of education, definition of the child.
<i>Clarence NELSON</i>	Hotlines/helplines, health problems facing children, vulnerable groups of children, child labour, juvenile justice, street children.
<i>Mikiko OTANI</i>	Civil rights and freedom, birth registration, privacy, access to information, freedom of religion.
<i>Luis Ernesto PEDERNERA REYNA</i>	Laws and legislations, freedom of association, ratification, independent monitoring complaint, privacy, torture, cruel and inhuman treatment, sexual exploitation.
<i>José Ángel RODRÍGUEZ REYES</i>	Discrimination, right to express their views, institutional care, adoption, health problems facing children, breastfeeding, intersex children.
<i>Kirsten SANDBERG</i>	Discrimination, best interest of the child, right to express their views, health problems facing children, reproductive health information, breastfeeding, children with disabilities, violence against children, data collection.
<i>Ann Marie SKELTON</i>	Child care and protection act, budget.
<i>Velina TODOROVA</i>	Violence against children, cruel inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment.
<i>Renate WINTER</i>	Corporal punishment, abuse and neglect, harmful practices, sexual exploitation, child trafficking, quality of education, age of criminal responsibility, juvenile justice.



## Examples of questions asked by Committee members under each cluster

### A. General Measures of Implementation

#### Mechanisms to monitor the implementation of the CRC

**Gehad Madi**

With regard to independent monitoring of children's rights violations, could you please inform the Committee about the number of complaints that have been filed?

**Hynd Ayoubi Idrissi**

What has been planned to make sure that children have confidential access to the monitoring mechanisms?

#### Budget

**Benyam Dawit Mezmur**

We acknowledge there have been financial challenges. What is the budget cut for education?

**Kirsten Sandberg**

On the allocation of resources, children have been disproportionately affected by the crisis. Have you had children's rights in the forefront when taking economic policies?

**Ann Marie Skelton**

Was this new child care and protection act costed before it was brought into operation? Is there a specific budget to run this new law?

#### Ratification of the Optional Protocols

**Amal Salman Aldoseri**

Could you please explain to us what constrains you from signing 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)?

**Luis Ernesto Pedernera Reyna**

Does Qatar have a timeframe for the updating of the Human Rights Treaties whose ratification that is still pending?

#### Policies: National Plan of Action (NPA)

**Jorge Cardona Llorens**

The approach of the national plan of action is very comprehensive. However, the words "boy" and "girl" only appear once. Could you explain why?

**Bernard Gastaud**

There is ambiguity regarding the implementation of the CRC and the development of your National Plan. Where are you exactly?

## Implementation of the CRC in national legislation

**José Angel Rodriguez Reyes**

Do you have any national or local body in charge of coordinating children's rights related public policies? How frequently do these bodies meet?

## Ombudsman

**Clarence Nelson**

Does the Ombudsman have an investigation team that deal with complaints? Does it have a legal department dealing with other issues?

## Dissemination of the Convention

**Renate Winter**

There is not much knowledge of the Convention among children and people dealing with children. Is there any plan to provide training on the Convention?

## Data collection

**Hynd Ayoubi Idrissi**

Data collection is an area that needs to be strengthened, especially in relation to indigenous population, orphans, etc. What measures are being taken by the State?

**Kirsten Sandberg**

There are certain categories not easy to find in your statistical system (*i.e.* regarding mental health, children not attending school, children victims of violence). Are you still making improvements in data collection?

## Cooperation between UNICEF, Civil Society and the Government

**Suzanne Aho Assouma**

How does the State works with NGOs? Is there any subvention for NGO's that endeavours to work for child protection?

**Bernard Gastaud**

Does cooperation with civil society exists? Can you tell us about the modalities of cooperation? Have NGOs been involved in the preparation of your State report?

## B. Definition of the child

### Concept of the child

**Amal Salman Aldoseri**

What is the legal definition of the girl child? Would you consider this definition in line with international standards?

**Gehad Madi**

The age of majority is 18, but those children who get married before reaching the age of 18 are already legally adults. How is that possible?

## C. General Principles

### Non-discrimination

**Olga Khazova**

Are children born out of wedlock discriminated?

### Best interest of the child

**Olga Khazova**

How is the best interest of the child taken into account in special situations, such as in cases where the parents are evicted from their apartment or they do not have appropriate documents etc.?

**Gehad Madi**

The Committee congratulates your country for the implementation of the principle in the Children Act. Yet, the principle does not have legal status as it is absent from the education act and decision-making in immigration policies. Are you planning to change this?

### Right to express their views

**Kirsten Sandberg**

In the judiciary system, can children voice their views in parental conflicts or institutional care? Do you provide training activities for judges on hearing children?

**Amal Salman Aldoseri**

What platforms are there for children voices to be heard? What trainings are available to give due consideration to the views of the child in all settings?

### Right to participation

**José Ángel Rodríguez Reyes**

Can children participate in public life? Can young people associate freely? Do you have any Child parliament for instance?

## D. Civil Rights and Freedoms

### Nationality

**Amal Salman Aldoseri**

Can mothers transfer their nationality to their children?  
Have children of asylum seekers granted nationality when they are born?

**Suzanne Aho Assouma**

Registration of travellers and Roma children: are there facilities to declare those children's birth?

### Birth registration

**Suzanne Aho Assouma**

What is the deadline to obtain a birth certificate? What is the rate of non-declaration? And what is the

rate of children with anonymous parents?

The registration system seems to be too centralized; How do people from rural areas register? Is the registration free? If not, is there any scope to remove the fee?

Is there any programme to raise awareness on the importance of birth registration? And, are the non-registered children allowed the access to education?

#### **Jorge Cardona Llorens**

You said that children born outside of the wedlock are registered. However, relations outside marriage are penalized and this may dissuade women from registering the child. What measures do you take to avoid this and prevent women from being penalized?

#### **Mikiko Otani**

Is the requirement of the forensic medical examination still a challenge to the children born in the home and in the settings other than hospitals? Have you taken awareness raising measures and a training for hospital staff, administrators and other health professionals through the country on this new procedure? Do you have a data collection system to identify the number of non-registration of births and monitor if this new procedure has positive impacts of reducing non-registration?

### **Freedom of association**

#### **Luis Ernesto Pedernera Reyna**

How children are involved in these human rights associations in schools? How are they created? Do they become members through elections? What powers do they have? What activities do they carry out? What resources do they receive? Do children know about these human rights associations?

### **Freedom of religion**

#### **Mikiko Otani**

Can you confirm if the decision of students being allowed to not attend religion class, as part of the curriculum, if a written request is made by their parents, is actually issued? Can you inform the Committee if any legislative measures to amend a national education law which was found unconstitutional or any other measures in response to this constitutional core decision has been made or planned? If this provision is still effective, how the right with a child to opt out attending religious class is actually implemented? How are the students and their parents informed of the option not to attend religion class? How many students are choosing not to attend? How are those students who don't attend religion class treated in the school?

### **Child parliaments**

#### **Bernard Gastaud**

Children's governments: what they do and how are they elected?

### **Right to information, privacy and the use of Social Media**

#### **José Ángel Rodríguez Reyes**

At what age may a child have access to information about their biological identity? Can they seek for their biological parents' identity?

### **Bernard Gastaud**

How are you addressing the access to harmful material on the internet? Is there any legislation on the adequate use of internet?

Is media protecting the privacy of children during proceedings where they are actors or victims in conflict with the law?

### **Mikiko Otani**

How do you ensure that the children are effectively protected from broadcasting their images or statement which should not be because the contradict of best interest of the child? Are there any safe guard mechanisms to prevent such broadcastings?

Any education on the risks of internet is included in the subject on ICT as preventive measures to protect the children from exposure to harmful information and harmful materials or products targeted children in response to our previous recommendation? Are there any monitoring and body for the internet services?

### **Luis Ernesto Pedernera Reyna**

How could you protect the privacy of children's lives and not arbitrarily interfering in their privacy, in such a way that you don't break the bound of trust that exist between the parents and their children and protecting their privacy in the process?

What in the privacy children are victims of and what remedies are available to children when their privacy is being invaded?

### **Velina Todorova**

Media initiatives to discuss personal stories of victims of sexual abuses: are there similar intentions as far as corporal punishment is concerned, somehow to be covered by this good media practice?

## **E. Violence against children**

### **Corporal punishment**

#### **Clarence Nelson**

Is it true that corporal punishment is still legal as response to certain religious offenses?

#### **Amal Salman Aldoseri**

Do your laws explicitly prohibit corporal punishment in all settings?

### **Abuse and neglect**

#### **Renate Winter**

In relation to domestic violence, your State has taken punitive measures against parents. However, this is not sufficient. Is there any program to assist parents in changing behaviour?

Do child abandonment and mistreatment happen in the same way in all regions?

### **Harmful practices**

#### **Jorge Cardona Llorens**

What about the violent practice of forced marriage of girls? We know it is prohibited by law, but it is not yet punishable under the criminal code. What about bride kidnaping? What strategies do you have to combat these harmful practices?

### **Hatem Kotrane**

Taking into account previous concluding observations, I can see that the minimum age for marriage has been raised to 16 years. However, I further recommend to raise it to 18 years. Could you please clarify what is standing in the way for raising the age of marriage in all circumstances?

Moreover, it seems that one child out of two gets married before the age of 18. What are you doing to stop this trend?

## **Sexual exploitation and sexual abuse**

### **Gehad Madi**

Sometimes sexual exploitation cases end up in suicide. How many of those cases are taken to courts?

### **Renate Winter**

Concerning stigmatization of children who have been sexually abused, is there any education and reintegration plan in rural areas?

### **Luis Ernesto Pedernera Reyna**

How many boys and girls are affected by sexual exploitation and what concrete measures have been taken to care for the children who have been sexual exploited and abused?

## **Child victims of violence**

### **Benyam Dawit Mezmur**

Could you please clarify if your State allows that someone who has violated a child's human right is not necessarily punished if violence was performed in good faith?

### **Suzanne Aho Assouma**

Victims of sexual violence and abuse: what programmes are available for children in order for them to recover both physically and psychologically?

### **Luis Ernesto Pedernera Reyna**

Are prison guards trained? Are children informed of the fact that torture is a crime under law? Do protection measures make it possible for people to report cases of torture, cruel and degrading treatments?

Can children be physically punished in their homes and at schools? Does the law embodies a standard saying that corporal punishment is unacceptable in homes, at school, and care centres for children?

### **Velina Todorova**

Are there plans of the governments to address the corporal punishment in the family? Plans to held some awareness campaigns or some training for parents?

## **Hotline / Helpline**

### **Clarence Nelson**

Do you have helplines available to children 24/7 and nationwide? Are they supported by the State or privately funded?

### **Hynd Ayoubi Idrissi**

How do you guarantee that children have access to the toll-free number for complaints?

### **Mikiko Otani**

Is there child-friendly information on the complaint system created and disseminated? Would you provide us with the information on the number of the complains in relation to the children?

### **Luis Ernesto Pedernera Reyna**

How many complaints does the national human rights institution has received in terms of violations of the rights of the child? And how have you process these complaints, in particular, since the creation through the special unit dedicated to the rights of women, children and people with disabilities?

### **Velina Todorova**

How the safety of child that makes use of helplines and independents complaint mechanisms is ensured? Whether the child helpline have received State funding and are there plans of the government to promote other free helplines for children, so the children could be aware of these services and to use them? Who answers the telephone? Are people, responding to the child, trained? What are the consequences for the child, for example is there any follow-up of the complaints or not?

Do these methodologies for early identification and intervention in cases of violence that have multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary nature function as a referral mechanism and as such are they part of the sectoral normative frameworks? What are the triggers of the mechanism, is particular as far as children in close settings are concerned? What is the status of anonymous signals of abuse and neglect? Who is the leading institutions to manage the case and what training is provided to professional engaged? What kind of services are already in place and how the demand is encouraged?

## **Child trafficking**

### **Renate Winter**

Babies are sometimes sold by mothers and sometimes by nurses. How do you deal with this two different types of situations? In which way are the mothers sanctioned and in which way are the nurses?

### **Bernard Gastaud**

What happens to the rescued children? And to the perpetrators?

## **F. Family environment and alternative care**

### **Assistance to families**

#### **José Ángel Rodríguez Reyes**

Family support programmes and services are very important to reduce poverty. But what is the scope of such programmes? How many families do these programmes involve?

#### **Kirsten Sandberg**

Court system: we would like to see more training in family law. Also there are long delays and geographic disparities. Do you have mediation in family law cases?

### **Institutional care**

#### **Kirsten Sandberg**

You do not have paternal leave and your maternal leave is very low. Are you planning on changing this? We've been informed that there are serious delays in taking children living in harmful environments into alternative care. Were you aware of that? Are you doing something to solve this?

We have also been informed that there are not enough social workers to supervise and inspect children placed in foster care. What are you doing to address this?

### Children of incarcerated parents

#### Jorge Cardona Llorens

According to your law, a mother should be able to stay with her child until the age of 2. However, does this happen in practice or do some children stay in prisons with mothers until the age of 5-7 years old?

#### Olga Khazova

Do children with incarcerated mothers have the possibility to keep contact with them?  
If the child is born in prison, what happens to him/her?

### Adoption

#### Olga Khazova

Where are the two names (old and new) of an adopted child recorded? What is written in the birth certificate?

#### Hatem Kotrane

Do you prosecute the intermediaries in cases of illegal adoption for sale of children?

### Early childhood development

#### Suzanne Aho Assouma

In your report, you talk about maintenance payments and the fact that if the father cannot pay the mother has to provide the financial support to the child. However, what happens if none of the parents can afford?

#### José Angel Rodriguez Reyes

What policies are being applied to improve child nutrition? And to cut problems of stunting growth of children?

## G. Basic Health and Welfare

### Health problems facing children

#### Jorge Cardona Llorens

What about children of people condemned to death what measures are taken for psychological trauma?

### Adolescent health

#### Hatem Kotrane

Has there been any movement about decriminalising abortion when it comes to young girls?

#### Clarence Nelson

Regarding substance abuse, do you have any treatment shelters for drug users? Are there in all areas?



## Maternal health

**Suzanne Aho Assouma**

We have not received figures for maternity death rates; how big is this phenomenon?

You have talked about your national program for preventing transmission of HIV but you do not talk about mothers affected by HIV?

## Primary health care services

**Suzanne Aho Assouma**

Any measures to improve transports and roads? For instance, for women who have to go give birth? Regarding air pollution, what is being done to enable women to cut back on the use of wood and coal for cooking?

## Reproductive health information

**Suzanne Aho Assouma**

Criminalisation of abortion unless it is a rape: do not you think this will encourage clandestine abortions? Should you not decriminalise abortions?

## Breastfeeding

**Kirsten Sandberg**

There is no information in your report about breastfeeding, what is the proportion of children breastfed for 6 months and what kind of marketing of breast milk substitutes do you have?

**José Ángel Rodríguez Reyes**

What percentage of hospitals apply an effective maternal breastfeeding programme? What percentage of hospitals are applying those programmes?

## Children with disabilities

**Jorge Cardona Llorens**

Children with disabilities: sterilization of girls with legal authorization. What is the criteria for legal decisions? What are the conditions to set out the sterilization?

Are you going to change from a medical to a human rights approach towards children with disabilities?

**Amal Salman Aldoseri**

What is being made to offer public/free transportation for those children? How many children with disabilities are being institutionalized? Do they have access to education and health care in those institutions?

**Cephas Lumina**

Could you provide the Committee with an update on training of health workers on a community-based rehabilitatee and disability assessment? In particular, how such health workers have been trained to date? How many have been trained to date and what is their distribution across the country?

What measures are being implemented to combat the stigmatisation and the prejudice of children with disabilities?

## H. Education, Leisure and Cultural Activities

### Access to school

**Amal Salman Aldoseri**

Is primary education obligatory and free of charge? Even for children without the nationality?

### Inclusive education

**Jorge Cardona Llorens**

How many schools have an inclusive education system that eliminates barriers for access for children with special learning needs and physical disabilities? What about teacher's training to provide for children with special needs?

The data you provide says 97% of children are in inclusive education and only 3% are in special education. This does not corroborate other information we have. What are the numbers?

Do you have inclusive education units inside the ordinary schools?

**Cephas Lumina**

What mechanisms are in place to monitor implementation of this inclusive education standards by the schools? What remedies or sanctions are available for non-compliance by a school?

### Free and compulsory education

**Kirsten Sandberg**

Could you give us a timeframe for the new education bill?

### Quality of education

**Renate Winter**

Due to financial restraints, some of the schools in rural areas are ungraded schools. Several grades are put together. Is there any possibility to cope with smaller classes?

Repetition in the first grade is very frequent and dropout rates are high. What are you going to do to prevent this? Is there a possibility for a curriculum adjustment?

**Benyam Dawit Mezmur**

Are there disparities in access to education between rural areas and cities? What are the measures and what are the positive impacts in this regard?

### Bullying

**Jorge Cardona Llorens**

Do you intend to implement active policies on bullying in schools?

**José Ángel Rodríguez Reyes**

What measures are you taking to avoid bullying in schools? Do you undertake periodic inspections / monitoring?

## Human and children's rights education

### Olga Khazova

Courses on the rights of the child are not systematically taught in all schools and it is not in the program of education. Do you plan to make any changes in this regard to the school curricula?

### Clarence Nelson

Is the Convention part of the school curricula?

## Facilities in schools

### Olga Khazova

Transport to the boarding schools. These children are they taken daily or once a week? Do they stay there the whole week?

## Leisure

### Amal Salman Aldoseri

Gang violence is making very difficult for children to enjoy their daily lives since children are afraid to go out to play, fearing to be violated or kidnap. Are you taking any measure to tackle this?

### Kirsten Sandberg

Children say that they do not have places to hang out with friends. Do you have public leisure centres for them providing activities?

## Drop-out rates

### Jorge Cardona Llorens

Pregnant girls drop out of schools, what measures are you taking?

### Bernard Gastaud

School dropout rates are pretty high, partially due to the lack of training of your teachers, too much reliance on NGOs, and private schools are extremely expensive. What are you doing to standardise education?

## I. Special Protection Measures

### Vulnerable groups of children

#### Hatem Kotrane

Indigenous and poor children have a poor access to the health system. What protection measures do you have?

#### Olga Khazova

Issues of baby boxes. How do you deal with mothers who are in risk of leaving their babies? How are you preventing baby abandonment?

### Child labour

#### Bernard Gastaud

Regarding the economic exploitation of children, there has been an increase of inspectors; but is there precise data of the number of employers that have been prosecuted for child labour?

## Children in conflict with the law: age of criminal responsibility

### Hynd Ayoubi Idrissi

Proposed bill to reduce criminal responsibility at 16 or to leave it at 18 but change the length of prosecution. Are you willing to reduce criminal responsibility? What is happening now? People want to have a tougher hand on crime given the pressure. What are your intentions?

### Gehad Madi

The Committee is concerned that in your legislation the age of minimum criminal responsibility is 8, which is way too low. Are you planning to modify it to comply with the standards of the Convention?

## Juvenile justice

### Renate Winter

When a child is put in prison and when is he put in the juvenile justice system?  
How far in the review of the juvenile justice system are you? What about the 12 to 16 year old offenders: what law are they under? What possibilities are there for them and what alternatives to detention are legally possible? Are children in conflict with the law denied education?

### Clarence Nelson

Are accused children allowed to legal representation? What if they cannot afford it?  
Does the new juvenile justice legislation abolish corporal punishment or lifelong imprisonment?

### Luis Ernesto Pedernera Reyna

Is the national human rights institution allowed to visit places of detention? Why do they need to ask permissions and cannot make unannounced visits?

## Children in street situation

### José Angel Rodríguez Reyes

Do you have any policies to prevent children in street situation to be exploited?

## Refugee children

### Amal Salman Aldoseri

Do you keep track (register) of refugees and asylum seekers children?

### Bernard Gastaud

Regarding children in street situation: Do you have any national census? And any global strategy to address this phenomenon?