



ngo group for the crc

NGO FORUM for National Child Rights Coalitions

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I. WORKSHOP 1: Next steps: Activities to undertake after submitting a CRC alternative report

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Background to the discussion

NGO representatives from 4 different countries discussed possible steps forward and strategies to be carried on now that they had submitted their alternative report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

They identified 3 main stages:

- Stage One: activities to be undertaken between the submission of the alternative report (before the pre-session) and the session of the Committee
- Stage Two: follow-up activities to be undertaken as soon as the Concluding Observations are issued in the short-term
- Stage Three: follow-up activities to be undertaken in the long-term, until the next alternative report

STAGE ONE: Before and During the Pre-Session

Before the Pre-Session

- Coordinate with UNICEF before the pre-session. If possible, set up a pre-meeting.

TIP: By establishing who will cover which issues before the pre-session, you can ensure that all information is covered and that the time with the Committee is used most effectively.

- Provide more concrete recommendations to the Committee; articulate concerns and recommendations in the Committee’s “language”; suggest how the Committee should raise certain questions.

TIP: The Committee has no legal authority so it can only “urge”, “encourage” or “recommend” a State to take specific actions; it responds best when the NGOs concerns and recommendations are raised in this manner.

- Establish measures and indicators that convey how the CRC is being implemented in the municipalities (both process and outcome indicators). Determine which indicators the Committee members are most familiar with and use these to convey your data and support your recommendations.

TIP: If the Committee receives detailed information from NGOs, it can ask the State more specific, pointed questions, which leads to better recommendations.

During the Pre-Session

- Provide specific, up-to-date data in the pre-session meeting. Offer information about best practices and highlight the issues that are being overlooked in the State’s report.

TIP: The Committee uses the information provided by the State and NGOs to monitor the rights outlined in the CRC; therefore NGOs must try to provide clear and concise information that the Committee can draw upon.

Between the Pre-Session and the Session

- Send the most up-to-date information to the NGO Group so it can distribute it to the Committee members.

TIP: If you send it directly to the Country Rapporteur it might not get distributed to the other Committee members.

- Schedule a pre-meeting with the government to prepare them for the Geneva session. Sometimes governments request to talk to NGOs.

Remember: Do not tell them which questions to expect because the Committee wants to hear their answers.

STAGE TWO: After the CRC session (Short Term)

- Raise awareness about the Concluding Observations using the media and other avenues.
Remember: Publicising the Concluding Observations helps to hold the government accountable.

- Treat the Concluding Observations as an official UN document to emphasize that the issues are critical.

Remember: Often children's rights issues get pushed to the side after the session, so NGOs and civil society must work to maintain focus on these issues.

- Use the Concluding Observations to ground advocacy and influence other UN bodies.

TIP: To use the CRC and the Concluding Observations to its full potential, NGOs and civil society must use the documents as tools to remind the government of its commitment and to inform and educate communities about children's rights.

- Assist in the establishment of student councils and advocate for children's participation
- Arrange for the Country Rapporteur to visit your country within a year of the CRC examination and provide the Committee with feedback and updates between sessions.

TIP: This encourages follow-up to the concluding observations. The Committee responds positively to NGO feedback, but remember that the Committee's approach is based on constructive criticism. The Committee does not issue press releases that "shame" the government.

STAGE THREE: After the CRC session (Long Term)

- Maintain a long-term view; change will not happen overnight.
- Involve other actors (e.g. religious leaders and social workers) in addition to NGOs, the government and the UN Committee.

TIP: Engaging multiple actors will help to create and sustain momentum between sessions to keep children's rights as a State priority.

- Educate teachers, psychologists, social workers, doctors, and religious leaders about children's rights. If these professionals have more background and perspective, then children's rights have a better chance of being realized.

TIP: Training professionals will help ensure that knowledge of the CRC is real knowledge, not just lip service.

- Establish more coordination, collaboration and communication with the government, and other NGOs and institutions.
- Mobilize and involve children, parents and families to strengthen the community forces.
- Keep pressure on the government to prioritize children’s rights issues.

Remember: Accountability is critical to the success of the CRC. States need pressure from NGOs to be accountable.

- Update outside actors (e.g. donor countries, etc.) about the implementation of the CRC.

TIP: Bringing donor countries up-to-date is another way to keep the momentum alive and expand the conversation about children’s rights.

General Notes:

- The success of the CRC relies on the goodwill of the State.
- The CRC Committee is made up of experts, but holds no political power. It can recommend that a country needs international help/external advocacy if the government states this in its submitted report.
- There is always some progress, even it is hard to identify at first.
- What is expected from a peaceful country cannot be expected from a country with conflict.
- A new Optional Protocol is being drafted to create a complaints mechanism. This will allow children, NGOs, parents, ombudsmen, etc. to issue complaints directly to the Committee (for more information on this process, see <http://www.crin.org/NGOGroup/childrightsissues/ComplaintsMechanism/>).

II. **WORKSHOP 2: Focus on another UN mechanism: The Universal Periodic Review (UPR)**

Moderator: Roland Chauville

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Background to the discussion

Roland Chauville, Director of UPR-Info, an NGO specialised in the UPR mechanism, explained to the participants how they could engage in this other UN mechanism and the added value it could have with regard to the CRC alternative reporting process and follow-up to Concluding Observations.

UPR – How NGOs Can Engage

- Get involved in the drafting of your State report.
- Submit an individual five-page report, or a joint ten-page report, to the OHCHR to be incorporated in the official NGO compilation.

Note: NGO reports are part of the official report in the UPR procedure, unlike the CRC alternative report.

- Utilize the NGO Group for technical support (e.g. editing report drafts and connecting with UN Missions in Geneva)
- Lobby other states (via their embassies and UN missions in Geneva) to make recommendations to your state during the UPR. Identify 3 or 4 key issues and limit the number of recommendations to 2 or 3 for each issue.

Note: Successful recommendations have included the ratification of the Optional Protocols to the CRC and inviting Special Rapporteurs to visit specific countries.

- Lobby your State to accept more recommendations before the UPR outcome report is adopted by the Human Rights Council.

Remember: The UPR is a win or lose mechanism: if a recommendation is accepted then the issue is likely to be improved, but if it is rejected there is little chance for improvement in the next four years.

UPR – How it complements the CRC alternative reporting process

- Use the UPR to reinforce the Concluding Observations from the CRC, and vice versa. The two instruments complement each other.

TIP: The UPR is a political body (rather than an expert body) it also receives more publicity, use these two features to your advantage.

- Bear in mind that the UPR is more political and therefore States are more ready to follow up on their commitment to the recommendations.