



Handbook for Adults Monitoring and Engaging in a Session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child

Child Rights Connect

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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 monitoring and engaging in a session of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

It contains practical information to be well prepared for the session and how action can be taken.

This Handbook complements the information you can find on our [mini site on the Committee’s reporting cycle](#) and our **Handbook for Children Monitoring and Engaging in a Session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child**.

Also note that we have a **Handbook for Adults Participating in the Pre-Session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child** and a **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



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
- ✓ via Skype: username: childrights1
- ✓ by phone: landline: +41 22 552 41 30

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Introduction: Important keywords

➤ Session

A three-week meeting period that takes place in Geneva, Switzerland. During the session, the Committee meets with government representatives from the countries up for review to discuss how each State is fulfilling its children's rights obligations.

➤ Country session

A public meeting between the Committee and the State representatives of the country up for review, during which they have an "interactive dialogue" about the situation of children's rights in the country.

➤ Pre-session

A one-week meeting period that takes place in Geneva, Switzerland. During the pre-session, the Committee meets with the children's rights defenders they have decided to invite, based on the alternative reports they have received, to prepare for the country session with State representatives.

I. What is a Country Session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child?

During the session weeks, the Committee meets with government representatives from the countries up for review to discuss the extent to which and how each State is fulfilling its children's rights obligations.

The Committee bases the interactive dialogue with the government representatives on many things, including: the State report, the government's written replies to the Committee's list of issues, the civil society's submissions, information shared during the pre-session and children's meetings, and other relevant documentation received or consulted by the Committee.

A country session is a public meeting: anyone, including representatives of NGOs, UN agencies, National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), students, journalists, and children, can attend the meeting as an observer. But no one other than the State representatives or the Committee can speak during the meeting. The meeting can be watched online live or after the meeting.

Tips! To have a better idea of what a country session looks like, you can look at the current archives of other sessions on the [UN Web TV](#).

I. When and where does the session of my country take place?

The country session is normally scheduled 6 months after the Committee's pre-session with civil society under the standard procedure, or 3 months after the Committee's pre-session with civil society under the Simplified Reporting Procedure (SRP).

The Committee meets three times a year for 4 weeks each time: the first three weeks in January, May and September are the session and the fourth week in February, June and October is the pre-session. The dates of the country sessions are published on the [CRC session calendar webpage](#).

Country sessions usually take place in Geneva, Switzerland, at the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights ([OHCHR](#)) in [Palais Wilson](#).

! In March 2020, the CRC Committee is holding its 84th session in Samoa to review the States of Cook Islands, Micronesia and Tuvalu, and for the pre-session of Kiribati, becoming the first ever Human Rights Treaty Body organising an in-country session!

They are webcast live on [UN Web TV](#) and the videos are archived for future viewing.

On the first day of the session, at 10am Geneva time, a public opening is held, which includes: the adoption of the session agenda and programme of work, and updates on submissions of State reports, new ratifications, and activities of the CRC Committee. A few stakeholders (UN agencies, OHCHR Representatives and Child Rights Connect) are invited to deliver statements. A public closing is held on the last day of the session at 5pm Geneva time. The Committee also engages in a series of closed meetings throughout the session period.

II. The structure of the country session

The review of a State under the CRC (or integrated CRC and optional protocols reports) lasts two three-hour country sessions. These take place on the same day with a two-hour break or during an afternoon and the next morning (with an extended break overnight). This depends on how the meetings are scheduled.

For the review of an optional protocol only, the country session lasts half a day (three hours).

The Committee is more and more open to having a dialogue with government delegations remotely, through teleconference.

The country session is a question and answer meeting that will feed the Committee's Concluding Observations, and it is structured as follows:

First part (3 hours) – Day 1 at 10am or 3pm

Introduction:

- Brief opening remarks by the Chairperson
- Introduction of the State delegation and short opening statement by the head of the delegation

Questions & answers:

- First set of questions on the first 5 clusters of the Convention by the country rapporteurs or task force members, followed by other Committee members.
Although there are no official clusters of questions for the two Optional Protocols, questions are mostly around prevention, protection, prohibition and sanctions.

10-15-minute break to allow time for the State delegation to organise its replies to the questions

- Government's responses to the Committee's questions and follow-up questions from the Committee during the responses
- Second round of questions from the Committee on the 4 other clusters

Break at 1pm or 6pm. The government has time to prepare their responses to the questions, and consult with their colleagues in the capital, if possible and needed.

Second part (3 hours) – Day 1 at 3pm or Day 2 at 10am

Conclusions:

- Final questions from the Committee to try to make the government responds to the main pending questions, if any. The floor is therefore mainly for the delegation who can respond to the questions and concerns in any order. Committee members may interrupt the government speakers to ask follow-up questions, making it an interactive dialogue
- Concluding remarks from the Committee and the State party

Country Rapporteurs and Task Force

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

The country rapporteurs or task force have the mandate to lead the dialogues with State Representatives during the country session. Appointments may change from the pre-session.

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

State Delegation

The composition of the State Delegation is public information available on the Committee's website under the List of delegation/participants for each country [session](#).

II. Monitoring the Country Session

About the content of the dialogue

Whether you follow the session in person or remotely, it should be noted that some issues important to you may not be raised by the Committee, and that the government may avoid answering certain questions or provide an answer you do not agree with or find satisfactory. This can sometimes be frustrating, for example if there has been lots of advocacy efforts beforehand. It is therefore important to keep this in mind yourself, with your colleagues and to manage these limitations when empowering children in engaging in the CRC Reporting cycle.

I. Attending the country session in person

1. Why attend the country session in person?

Civil society should consider attending the plenary session. Although they do not have a right to speak during the meeting, they may participate as observers in order to obtain a **comprehensive picture of the dialogue with the government**.

It can also be an invaluable opportunity to **meet the government representatives** in a setting where child rights are being discussed in depth, as it can provide a strong basis for follow-up advocacy and joint activities.

Although the Committee does not meet formally with NGOs during the session, attending the country session can be an opportunity to informally meet with Committee members, particularly taskforce members for your country, to provide updates since the pre-session.

Thus, the session can be a useful opportunity to **meet with Committee members informally** before or during the plenary session to provide comment on the country session and the questions raised/not raised. You may also wish to establish contact with the Committee members to follow-up on the Concluding Observations once these are made public.

 Before and after each country session, Child Rights Connect organises briefings and debriefings for all children's rights defenders to provide any last-minute update and guidance, address any pending question, concern or issue and discuss advocacy strategies for the follow-up stage. Briefings are usually held 1 hour before the meeting and debriefings right after the country session.

Should children also attend the country session?

Country sessions are not really child-friendly. Since children will not be allowed to intervene during the meeting, it may be more appropriate and interesting for them to follow the dialogue online or watch selected extracts afterwards (see next section: Following the country session remotely through the webcast for further information).

2. Accreditation to enter the UN buildings

Any observer to the country session should obtain the necessary accreditation from OHCHR. The only limitation to the number of participants is space in the rooms.

Detailed information about the procedures to follow and the contact person can be found [here](#).

! Failing to seek accreditation from OHCHR will prevent you from accessing the building and attending your country session.

Accreditation to the UN is done in 2 steps:

1. Before the country session:

- ✓ Participants must register through the unique OHCHR online platform for accreditation [Indico](#). The session link will be available on the [CRC webpage](#), under “Upcoming Events”. Please consider that you will have to create an account, fill in a form and upload an ID photo. Kindly allow two working days for your request to be processed.

2. On the day of the country session:

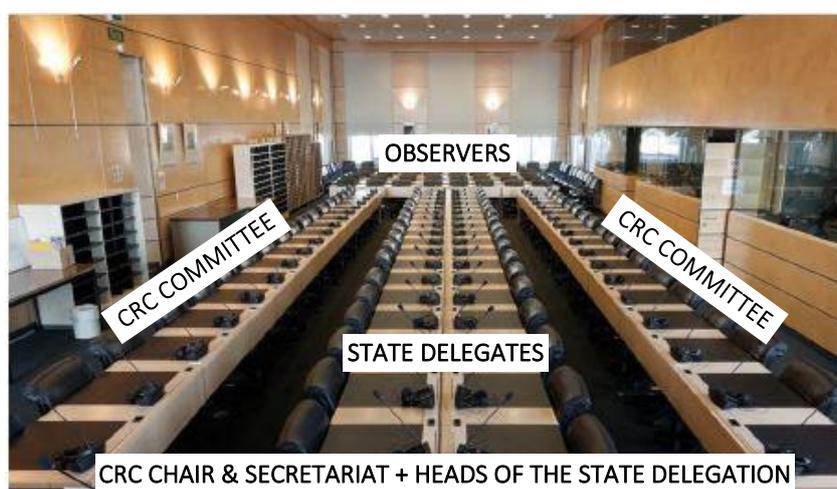
- ✓ Go to the security gate of Palais Wilson (street address: 52 rue des Pâquis, 1201 Geneva, Switzerland) where the country session takes place. Entrance is allowed 20 minutes prior to the start of the country session. Bring the confirmation of registration which includes the QR code and your passport or your ID card.

3. Session meeting room layout

The session usually takes place in the meeting room on the ground floor (see picture below). The Chair of the Committee leads the meeting from the podium and the heads of the State delegation and the CRC Secretary will sit next to him or her.

The Committee members sit around the tables on the sides and the rest of State delegates sit around the tables in the middle.

Observers, including NGOs representatives, sit at the rows of tables at the back of the room.



Source: UNOG

II. Following the country session remotely through the webcast

All country sessions are webcast in English, as well as in another relevant language: French, Spanish or national language when available.

The videos are webcast live and then archived for future viewing on the [UN Web TV](#): click on LIVE NOW or MEETINGS & EVENTS -> HUMAN RIGHTS TREATY BODIES -> COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD -> select current or past sessions.

The webcast has already helped to raise awareness and understanding about the Committee's review of States and live streams have been watched by NGOs, children, UN agency country teams, as well as government and NHRI officials across the world.

Archived videos can be used as a basis for awareness-raising and training on the work of the Committee, or for advocacy activities to follow up on the Committee's recommendations.

Supporting children to follow the country session webcast

It is essential where possible that children who engaged in previous steps of the reporting cycle are supported to follow the country session and provide feedback to accompanying organisations and the Committee on how their views were reflected during the dialogue between the Committee and the State, in the most appropriate way according to their evolving capacity.

Check our case study on Moldova: [Webcast – An Opportunity for Children to Engage in the Session](#)

III. How to effectively engage in the country session?

The idea is to monitor how the Government is responding to the Committee's questions in fulfilling its child rights' obligations. It is also a way to follow whether the issues, concerns or recommendations you might have raised during the pre-session or through your written submissions are taken into consideration in the dialogue.

! As the Concluding Observations will only reflect the issues raised during the dialogue with the State party, it is important for civil society to monitor the meeting.

1. If you are in Geneva

During the breaks of the country session, you can approach country rapporteurs/members of the task force and other Committee members to inform them about your comments on the dialogue. The Committee members decide on how to use this information during the dialogue with the State.

! You should not assist your government delegation in responding to the questions. Your independence could be questioned if you were seen doing so. You can obviously seize the opportunity to approach the delegation and have meetings with them, but you cannot be involved in their dialogue with the Committee.

2. Through the UN webcast

The webcast is a useful advocacy tool and an opportunity to bring part of the reporting process home, to raise awareness at national level and to organise capacity building activities.

If you are in Geneva but your colleagues could not come, they can watch the webcast of the country session live and transmit their questions and comments directly to you. You will, in turn, be able to transmit them to the Committee members during the breaks.

In case none of your colleagues are present in Geneva, Child Rights Connect can try to transmit some of the questions and comments -sent by email to Child Rights Connect- to the Committee members during the breaks. This is not always guaranteed when the questions and comments are of a high number.

We advise you to watch the webcast of a recent session to get inspired by the activities you would like to organise around it, how you can best benefit from it and what is technically feasible.

We have collected examples of concrete activities organised by organisations:

- Reuniting children and/or NGOs, Ombudsperson or Representatives, press and media... to watch the webcast, discuss the content of the dialogue and debrief together
- Sending live comments to your colleagues attending the country session or to Child Rights Connect to possibly approach the Committee and convey messages on your behalf
- Giving group or individual press interviews
- Sharing live comments through social media
- Drafting press releases

Please consider the following:

- The length of the country session: one entire day/two half days
- The language is quite technical and not everyone is familiar with the reporting process. It is then required to provide background information, short briefing on the reporting cycle, to guide or animate the discussions
- As per the materials, you will need a good internet connection and a computer. Possibly a beamer or a large screen and speakers if you wish to project the video
- Mitigation of any risks at national level, such as preventing of reprisals for organising such a meeting
- Participation of some stakeholders might involve costs (transportation, lunch, etc.)

Please, share your experience at crcreporting@childrightsconnect.org



Child Rights Connect also covers each country session on social media via its [Twitter](#) and [Facebook](#) accounts.

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

1. Publicising your engagement

- ✓ You decide if you want to make your presence in Geneva, or your activities undertaken around the country session public, by being active on social media or engaging with media.
- ✓ To ensure the safe presence of national actors, including children, no photos or filming of the observers are allowed in the room. Only photos and recording of the Committee and Government representatives can be taken, and without disturbing the dialogue.

! Be aware that some children’s rights defenders attending the same country session as you or to another meeting taking place before or after yours, **could be at risk if their presence was known to others**. Please respect their needs and their safety.

! 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.

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

If you feel concerned about possible forms of reprisals relating to your presence at a country session, please inform Ms. Allegra Franchetti (afranchetti@ohchr.org), the Secretary of the Committee and us (crcreporting@childrightsconnect.org) as soon as possible.

If you experience reprisals after your presence at a country 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)
CH-1211 Geneva 10 (Switzerland)
Tel.: +41 22 917 91 41 - Fax: +41 22 917 90 08
E-mail: crc@ohchr.org

III. Following-up to the country session

I. What outcome documents and reports are made available?

1. Concluding Observations

On the last day of a session, the Committee adopts the [Concluding Observations](#) for all States reviewed during that session. These Concluding Observations point out the progress achieved, the main areas of concern and recommendations for how States can improve their compliance and implementation of the CRC and the OPs by States.

The Concluding Observations are public documents made available in English on the website of the Committee soon after the session, and also sent to both the State party and the UN General Assembly. They are then translated into French and Spanish (the other 2 working languages of the Committee), and Arabic, Chinese or Russian if one of these languages is more relevant for the reviewed State.

The Concluding Observations should be widely disseminated to those who were involved in the reporting process, as well as the broader child rights community, including through the creation of blogs, podcasts and films. A press conference around the time of the adoption of the concluding observations can also be organised.

Tips! Translating the Concluding Observations into national and local languages, if not done by the State, and making them available as soon as possible in accessible formats, including child-friendly, is a way to ensure that different stakeholders can take ownership and monitor progress. Where possible, we encourage you to advocate for the State to take forward these actions!

2. Meeting summary

A meeting summary of each country session is produced by the United Nations and published after the session on the official Web Site of the United Nations Office at Geneva. It can be found as part of the Press Releases & Meeting Summaries available on the [website](#).

Although summary records of the discussion are produced in French or English following the session, these contain a summary of the proceedings rather than a verbatim record of the discussion.

3. Child Rights Connect session overview

Child Rights Connect produces its own summary country session reports, highlighting reporting status, main issues discussed, and main recommendations included in the Concluding Observations. The reports can be found in Child Rights Connect's [overviews of each session and pre-session](#).

Our info pack also includes our children's participation monitoring and analysis as well as the status of ratifications, work on General Comments and relevant activities of the Committee and of Child Rights Connect around each session and the pre-session.

II. How to follow-up to the Concluding Observations?

The Concluding Observations of the CRC and all the other Treaty Bodies are not legally binding and so they are not enforceable at national level.

The Committee does not have a formal follow-up procedure, which would provide for the periodic assessment of the implementation of certain recommendations. At each periodic review, the Committee takes into account previous Concluding Observations and compares these with the progress detailed in the State report. At the national level, the Committee depends on independent national monitoring mechanisms to ensure that its recommendations are being implemented by the State.

! For both the State and civil society organisations, the publication of the concluding observations does not and should not signal the end of the CRC reporting process. The cycle should not end there!

The follow-up process is actually key to achieving positive change for children's rights and securing a real impact on law, policy and practice at national and local levels. Therefore, it is important to ensure that there are adequate human and financial resources for follow-up processes, including empowering children.

Tips! Read the guide on implementation of recommendations of human rights mechanisms: [How to Follow Up on United Nations Human Rights Recommendations - A Practical Guide for Civil Society](#). Additional languages are available on the [civil society webpage](#).

Below is a non-exhaustive list of activities and actions that can be undertaken at national level, to which Child Rights Connect might provide its technical assistance and capacity building support:

1. Advocacy activities

Concluding Observations can be integrated into on-going advocacy activities, using them as a tool to reinforce long-term advocacy objectives and drive the child rights agenda forward, as well as to put certain issues on top of the State's agenda.

You should analyse and prioritise the Concluding Observations based on your goals and strategies to assess which can be realistically integrated in your workplan.

2. Developing tools to monitor and measure the implementation progress

Although States are responsible for implementing the CRC and the OPs, NGOs and NHRIs should regularly monitor and assess the implementation of Concluding Observations. This can help inform your activities at national level, ensure comprehensive forthcoming submissions to the Committee (as well as other relevant UN human rights mechanisms) and to inform any advocacy with the State to ensure that the State is meeting its obligations.

This should include consistently collecting and analysing disaggregated data and information to determine the extent to which legislation, policy and practice are in compliance with the CRC and the Ops.

3. Working with government

Depending on the national context, civil society organisations can encourage the government to follow up on the Committee's recommendations and to develop indicators and national action plans. They can meet government officials, as well as UNICEF, other relevant UN agencies and children, in order to discuss the Concluding Observations and the steps which can be taken to implement them. In particular, it is possible to lobby ministers and officials to prepare a substantial response, an action plan or a roadmap of State's actions for the next 5 years.

4. Organising a follow-up visit by Committee Members

Civil society organisations may invite Committee members to conduct a field visit in order to meet with government officials, NGOs, NHRIs and children to discuss steps to be taken to follow up on the Committee's recommendations. These visits may be official and in response to an invitation issued by the State party. Committee members may also conduct informal visits, which do not involve an official invitation by the government.

Such visit allows larger numbers of children, and children from more diverse backgrounds, to actively participate in the CRC reporting process and to meet directly with Committee members, in their own environment.

 Child Rights Connect can help you to identify the relevant member(s) to invite based on thematic and regional expertise, as well as other treaty body representatives. We can also provide you with comments and advices on the concept note of such visit you might organise, based on previous experiences.

! It is important to note that Committee members and OHCHR have no budget to make country visits. Any invitation to visit a country should therefore include an offer to provide funding for the visit.

5. Documenting the reporting process

Civil society organisations may take up research activities as a basis for further areas of work where there is a lack of data or knowledge on a given issue. Annual or biannual progress reports on the implementation of the recommendations, based on indicators, can be produced and campaigns on priority themes from the Concluding Observations launched.

Training and capacity building may also be organised to contribute to a better understanding amongst stakeholders. It is important to collect lessons learned in planning for the next periodic reporting process.

Our follow-up case studies

To promote good practice and share examples of how the recommendations contained in the Concluding Observations have been translated into concrete activities, Child Rights Connect gathers case studies and publishes them on its website: www.childrightsconnect.org/publications/

Some examples of activities that NGOs can undertake include:

- ✓ promote the ratification of the CRC and OPs;

- ✓ advocate for the review and withdrawal of all reservations to the CRC and the OPs, where relevant;
- ✓ conduct awareness-raising activities, public campaigns and training programmes;
- ✓ support children in carrying out their own follow-up activities as part of on-going child participation in advocacy at national level;
- ✓ approach UNICEF to discuss inclusion of the Concluding Observations and recommendations in their advocacy and programmes activities;
- ✓ examine existing and draft legislation for compliance with the CRC and the OPs;
- ✓ conduct a budget analysis at all levels of government to determine how much is being directly or indirectly allocated to implement children's rights;
- ✓ conduct studies on issues of concern, especially if they are neglected/emerging issues;
- ✓ produce regular reports on the situation of children;
- ✓ use the media to gauge public opinion and encourage awareness of children's rights;
- ✓ form thematic groups of NGOs, for example within a coalition, which could focus on particular sets of the Committee's recommendations.

III. Engaging with other Human Rights Treaty Bodies and UN mechanisms

Even if the UN Committee on the rights of the child is the specialized body for children's rights, the recommendations made by other Treaty Bodies and UN human rights mechanisms can be of high relevance for children's rights defenders and many opportunities exist to engage.

Cross-referencing UN recommendations in follow-up to the CRC Concluding Observations is important to avoid following up in a compartmentalised or fragmented manner. A holistic and coordinated approach can help you to mainstream the children's rights issues, strengthen your advocacy and its positive impact, increase collaboration and coordination at national level across the broader UN human rights system, and more importantly, to promote children's rights as human rights!

! The [Human Rights Index](#) is a good tool for mapping the outcomes of other UN human rights mechanisms.

The different United Nations bodies that organisations can interact with to advocate for and advance children's rights include:

1. Human rights treaty bodies

Core international human rights treaties:

- [Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination](#)
- [Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#)
- [Human Rights Committee](#)
- [Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women](#)
- [Committee against Torture](#)
- [Committee on Migrant Workers](#)
- [Subcommittee on Prevention of Torture](#)
- [Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities](#)
- [Committee on Enforced Disappearances](#)

2. The Human Rights Council (HRC)

The HRC is an inter-governmental body that covers all human rights. It holds an Annual Day on the Rights of the Child on a different topic every March, resulting in the adoption of a resolution. Through different initiatives, the HRC covers many themes focused on children's rights, such as child early and forced marriage, education, birth registration, violence against children, refugee and migrant children, to name but a few.

In addition, recommendations of special procedures (country and thematic mandate), decisions of Treaty Bodies on individual cases, the work of the subsidiary bodies of the Human Rights Council, such as the Expert Mechanism on the Rights of indigenous peoples, the Forum on minority issues, the Social forum, and the Forum on business and human rights can be explored.

 Child Rights Connect can help you identify advocacy opportunities at the HRC based on your priorities.

3. The Universal Periodic Review (UPR)

The UPR is a mechanism under the HRC, whereby the overall human rights situation of each UN Member State is reviewed by all UN Member States, according to a fixed calendar. The UPR covers all human rights, including child rights. Although only States can take part in the review, NGOs can get involved in a variety of ways to make sure that key children's rights concerns are raised during the discussions and included in resulting recommendations. [Read our UPR factsheets.](#)

 Child Rights Connect is supporting the engagement of children in the UPR process, in partnership with the organisation [UPR-info](#).

Annex – Background Information on Committee Members

To better prepare for the country 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.

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.¹

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 country 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.

! **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.

¹ 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

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 IDRISSE</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>Bragi GUDBRANDSSON</i>	Mandatory reporting of sexual abuse cases
<i>Philip JAFFE</i>	Respect for the views of the child, child parliament, access to information, corporal punishment
<i>Olga KHAZOVA</i>	Best interest of the child, adoption, education regarding child rights, behavioural problems, family law, institutional care, parental responsibility.
<i>Faith MARSHALL-HARRIS</i>	Laws and policies, nationality, birth registration, abortion, child labour, juvenile justice,
<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, general principles, civil rights and freedoms
<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>Aissatou ALASSANE SIDIKOU</i>	Traditional practices, education
<i>Ann Marie SKELTON</i>	Childcare 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?

Ann Marie Skelton

Was this new childcare 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)

Mikiko Otani

In the new action plan, a council for children has a really important role. Were children involved in this process?

Implementation of the CRC in national legislation

José Angel Rodríguez 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 work with NGOs? Is there any subvention for NGO's that endeavours to work for child protection?

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

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?

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?

Benyam Dawit Mezmur

Would the State Party remove the fees for birth 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

Philip Jaffé

How does the government ensure that all children are represented in the child parliament?

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?

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

Amal Salman Aldoseri

5% of children are married at 16 years old. What measures are being taken to raise awareness of harmful effect of early marriage?

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 these two different types of situations? In which way are the mothers sanctioned and in which way are the nurses?

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?

Institutional care

Olga Khazova

Regarding the increase in the number of children removed from their families and placed in care services, how are you planning to prevent child removal? We have information about children that have been removed from their disabled parents. Can they keep in contact with them?

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?

How do you ensure that indigenous children in adoption keep the links with their families?

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 Ángel Rodríguez 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

Olga Khazova

Do you provide easy access to health services to all children, including those living in remote areas?

Adolescent health

Clarence Nelson

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

Cephas Lumina

The figures of children with disabilities only address children up to 14 years old. What happened with older children?

Olga Khazova

Regarding the raise of mental disorders, do you provide medical treatment of behavioural problems? What is the relation between stimulate drugs and he raise in suicidal rates?

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

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

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 rehabilitate 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

Velina Todorova

Are you planning to implement policies to ensure quality inclusive education for children with disabilities?

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

Amal Salman Aldoseri

According to the report, early childhood education is accessible for 90% of the children, does this include aboriginal children?

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

Amal Salman Aldoseri

Schools are becoming unsafe because bullying and cyberbullying, how are you dealing with this?

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?

Drop-out rates

Amal Salman Aldoseri

There are high rates of children with disabilities dropping out of school as they are being transferred to more distant schools and because of the long trip they eventually get tired. How are you planning to address this issue?

I. Special Protection Measures

Vulnerable groups of children

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?

Mothers from indigenous communities are afraid to report violence because they are afraid to lose their children. How are you dealing with this issue?

Child labour

Philipp Jaffé

Are there children working in private security companies?

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?