



Child Rights Governance

Universal Periodic Review:

Successful examples of child rights advocacy

Acknowledgments

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Written by: Diarra Diop
Design: Lisbeth Dina Jensen
Front cover photo: Ken Hermann
Back cover photo: Teri Pengilley/Save the Children UK

Acronyms

ACERWC: African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child

CHRP: Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines

COMADE: Child rights coalition of Mali (Coalition malienne des droits de l'enfant)

CRC Committee: UN Committee on the Rights of the Child

CRG: Child Rights Governance

CRGA: Child Rights Governance Assembly

CRM: Child Rights Movement

CSO: Civil Society Organization

IACHR: Inter-American Commission on Human Rights

NHRC: National Human Rights Commission

NGO: Non-Governmental Organization

OCHA: UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

OHCHR: Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

OP3 CRC: Third optional protocol to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child on a Communications Procedure

PAHRA: Philippines Alliance of Human Rights Advocates

UN: United Nations

UNCRC: United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

UNDP: United Nations Development Programme

UNICEF: United Nations Children's Fund

UPR: Universal Periodic Review

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Preface

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is the most ratified international human rights treaty. However, translating the vision of children's rights and the principles embodied in the Convention into national policy and practice is far from straightforward. Persistent violations of children's rights across the world highlight the significant gap that exists between legal and political declarations and the reality of children. It is not uncommon for children's rights to remain low on the national agenda in the face of other competing priorities and children's concerns tend to be viewed as "soft issues" confined to sector-specific debates as opposed to being elevated to a national priority.

Yet, State Parties to the UNCRC have an obligation to "undertake all appropriate legislative, administrative, and other measures" to implement the rights recognized in the Convention and "with regard to economic, social and cultural rights, States Parties shall undertake such measures to the maximum extent of their available resources and, where needed, within the framework of international co-operation" (Article 4, UNCRC).

Good governance for children is critical if we want to create meaningful change for children and this requires political leadership and accountability across the various state authorities and institutions. Equally important is the capacity of children and civil society to defend children's rights and to speak with one voice in holding states to account on their obligations to children.

Save the Children, through its Child Rights Governance Global Initiative, has been pushing for greater accountability for children's rights, notably through supporting child rights coalitions in engaging with regional and international human rights accountability mechanisms. Our engagement in the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) began with the first cycle in 2008 and is an integral part of our child rights monitoring strategy. The UPR peer-review by the international community has proven to be a powerful tool to hold States to account on their human rights record. It has brought a lot of attention on domestic political affairs and put pressure on States to act on UPR recommendations. We have sought to harness this tool to put pressure on States to prioritize their commitments to children under the UNCRC.

The UPR is gaining traction within the wider child rights community as reflected by the increased involvement of child rights coalitions since the beginning of the second cycle of the UPR in 2012. This is linked to the growing recognition that the UPR can be a catalyst for change.

Save the Children and its partners have used the UPR recommendations as an advocacy tool to reinforce ongoing national advocacy efforts aimed at securing legal and policy change for children, including by using the recommendations to influence bilateral dialogue between States, but also as a means of building a strong and unified civil society with the capacity to collect evidence, monitor progress and influence policy and practice for children.

This publication collects good practices examples of Save the Children engagement in UPR reporting and advocacy. It sheds light on the different strategies used to push forward child rights priorities to influence the UPR recommendations. It also provides some pointers on how the UPR recommendations can reinforce existing advocacy efforts and be integrated into follow-up plans to track their implementation. Key success factors and lessons learned were drawn to capitalise on the experience from these countries and inspire others to replicate these approaches in order to maximise advocacy outcomes and impact for children.

Anita Bay Bundegaard
Director and UN Representative
Geneva Advocacy Office

Lene Steffen
Director, Child Rights Governance Global Initiative,
Save the Children

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Introduction

Fighting for the realisation of children's rights is at the heart of Save the Children's mission and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) underpins everything that we do. This treaty has fundamentally changed the way we regard and treat children, moving away from the perception of children as objects of welfare to full subjects of rights. Fulfilling the vision of the UNCRC goes beyond adopting charters, laws, and policies for children and requires embedding a child rights approach into the whole policy-making process, with the best interests of the child as a core consideration.

No State in the world can claim to be free of child rights violations and all States have a duty to do their utmost to live up to their promises made to children when ratifying the UNCRC. Civil society actors have an important watchdog function in monitoring States' actions and holding them to account. Save the Children has longstanding experience in using child rights accountability mechanisms, in particular by working and building the capacity of child rights coalitions in monitoring the implementation of the UNCRC, in supporting the development of supplementary reports to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC Committee) and in follow-up on the CRC Committee's Concluding Observations. Regional mechanisms such as the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC), the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) and the mechanisms associated with these bodies are also used widely used for monitoring and advocacy purposes.

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is a new state-driven human rights accountability mechanism created by the United Nations General Assembly and established within the auspices of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva. It began its first cycle in 2008 with the periodic peer-review of the human rights record of all UN Member States.

Save the Children has seized the opportunity of the UPR from the outset to raise the profile of children's rights, by engaging directly in reporting and advocacy or supporting child rights coalitions. A total of 31 UPR submissions were submitted or supported by Save the Children in the first cycle (2008-2011) and this number has already been surpassed for the second cycle that began in 2012 and will end in 2016.

In contrast to the UNCRC reporting mechanism, which is conducted by the CRC Committee, composed of eighteen independent experts, the UPR is a state-led process where governments put pressure on each other to show-case political leadership and commitments on human rights. This is a highly visible and high-level political process where the intricacies between human rights diplomacy, geopolitical and national interests are evident. Although this can be a challenging process to navigate for child rights actors, the political dimension is also an opportunity for us to bring more visibility to child rights concerns in specific countries at the international level and get political pressure to influence the national agenda.

The eight case studies collected in this publication provide successful examples of how Save the Children and its partners have worked together in building effective joint advocacy strategies in the UPR process and use this mechanism as a tool to reinforce their existing programming and advocacy work. Although the process for reporting and advocacy follow the same patterns, this publication highlights different approaches, strategies and tools used by Save the Children and its partners at different stages of the UPR process to maximise advocacy outcomes for children's rights¹.

It is clear that achieving actionable child rights recommendations in the UPR is a critical outcome of Save the Children's engagement in the UPR reporting and advocacy but it is only one step in the process. Indeed, it is crucial to focus on implementation of these UPR recommendations in order to bring about positive change to children's lives. Although it is difficult to measure the direct impact of advocacy on children, these case studies illustrate how engagement in the UPR process has resulted in legal and policy changes in favour of children, strengthened quality of interaction between child rights actors, new funding opportunities for civil society and increased space for dialogue between civil society and national authorities.

Most importantly, linking existing national child rights advocacy initiatives and UPR advocacy has resulted in concrete policy changes. This shows that the UPR is not a stand-alone process. Rather it serves as a complementary tool to reinforce advocacy undertaken at different levels, including local, national or regional (for example, see the cases of Zambia, Philippines and Bangladesh) or advocacy towards different mechanisms such as the Human Rights Council (for example, the case of Mali), the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Inter-American Court of Human

¹ For further information on UPR advocacy opportunities and strategies see: Save the Children, *Child Rights Governance, Universal Periodic Review Toolkit Add-On, Advocacy Guide* (2012): <http://resourcecentre.savethechildren.se/library/universal-periodic-review-toolkit-add-advocacy-guide>

Rights (for example, the case of Peru). These examples show that UPR advocacy is most effective when there is an integrated approach through the involvement of the same networks and champions and the use of consistent messages and cross-references between different accountability mechanisms.

The UPR process creates significant opportunities for synergies across thematic sectors, linking humanitarian and development advocacy (for example, see the case of Mali) but also with other civil society partners, such as human rights groups and gender-based organizations (see for example, the cases of the Republic of Korea, Peru and the Philippines). This has not only enabled us to achieve better UPR outcomes in terms of child rights recommendations but has also strengthened civil society cohesion and opened doors for new partnerships.

Most importantly what these examples show is that the UPR process provides a framework for dialogue and concerted action at national and international levels between a broad range of child rights actors, including children themselves, governments, parliamentarians, embassies in country, missions in Geneva and Ministries of Foreign Affairs in capitals, national human rights institutions and the media.

Children have been at the forefront of child rights monitoring and reporting efforts and are considered key partners in all phases of the UPR process (see for example, the cases of Pakistan and Zambia). However, their participation in the UPR at the national and international levels has to be well planned, respectful of child safeguarding and child participation policies and principles, and facilitated through child-friendly materials and tools in order to be meaningful and effective.

By taking stock of the experience capitalised over these last six years, this compilation aims to provide valuable insights for future child rights advocates wanting to engage in the UPR process and more generally in child rights monitoring and advocacy.

Nepal: Engaging with the National Human Rights Commission as a strategic partner in UPR follow-up

KEY OUTCOMES:

- 91% of UPR child-focused recommendations were accepted and 57% of them focus on Save the Children's thematic priorities
- Joint UPR advocacy has helped achieve national advocacy goals: the National Child Policy and Comprehensive Standards for Child Care Homes and the Child Rights Bill were adopted in 2012
- Strengthened relationship between the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and child rights coalitions

BACKGROUND

Save the Children, through its child rights governance work, seeks to strengthen governance systems and civil society to ensure that States effectively implement the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

In Nepal, Save the Children trained 138 civil society organizations (CSOs) on how to use the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) to hold the government to account on their commitments to children.

Save the Children built upon its existing partnership with the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) to get them engaged in the UPR follow-up process to ensure there is authoritative and reliable information on the status of implementation of accepted UPR recommendations.

WHAT SAVE THE CHILDREN AND ITS PARTNERS DID

Save the Children developed an individual UPR submission highlighting specific asks relating to birth registration, non-discrimination against minority groups, corporal punishment, child marriage, sexual exploitation and trafficking, the right to education and the right to be heard. In parallel, we supported child rights coalitions, such as the National Coalition for Children as Zone of Peace, in providing input into the joint coalition submission produced by the Nepal NGO coalition for the UPR.

Save the Children engaged in coordinated advocacy at the national and international levels, including meetings with embassies in Kathmandu and with missions in Geneva to ensure key child rights concerns would be raised in the UPR process. Save the Children also built its UPR follow-up strategy around the mobilization of various national stakeholders, including civil society networks, the NHRC, embassies and the media, to enhance national ownership of the UPR process and strengthen accountability.

The UPR was instrumental in bringing Nepal's CSOs together around a common agenda for action. A combination of high-level bilateral and collective advocacy meetings with Government officials and embassies, and awareness-raising through the media was used including TV interviews and press articles on the UPR. Linking the UPR to specific events related to children, such as the national Child Rights Day, was particularly effective in generating media attention.

OUTCOMES

These joint efforts led to 34 recommendations focusing on child rights, including 31 accepted by the government of Nepal in 2011.

Save the Children, in collaboration with national child rights coalitions, was instrumental in ensuring that the national human rights institution (NHRC) included monitoring and follow-up of UPR child-focused recommendations into its mandate. The NHRC undertook a study to systematically assess the status of the implementation of UPR recommendations related to child rights and published a report in 2013. The report was launched with relevant stakeholders, including high-level government officials who are ultimately responsible to ensure the implementation of recommendations. These officials reiterated their commitment to implementing the UPR recommendations in accordance with the action plan prepared by the government.

As a result of coordinated follow-up efforts, UPR recommendation 108.4 calling for “the endorsement of long awaited child policy legislation, including the Child Rights Act, Education Regulation, Child Protection Policy, and minimum standards for child care homes” was partially implemented. Both the National Child Policy and Comprehensive Standards for Child Care Homes were adopted in 2012. The Cabinet also endorsed the Child Rights Bill. However, as of October 2013, the Bill had not yet been enacted by the Parliament, as the Constituent Assembly was dissolved in May 2012 and a new Parliament had not yet been constituted.

LESSONS LEARNED AND NEXT STEPS

The report published by the NHRC shows that the implementation of child-focused recommendations should be more targeted and specific and the process should be speeded up. While this study is important to document progress, a more regular follow-up with government agencies responsible to implement each recommendation is necessary. Follow-up will be more effective if it is undertaken jointly by the NHRC and civil society coalitions involved in the UPR process.

UPR recommendations should also be considered for programme design by organizations working on child rights issues. This gives legitimacy for these organizations to follow up with the government and this will also help ensure that recommendations are implemented to the highest extent possible. However, the whole process of implementation and follow-up would be facilitated if the UPR recommendations were more specific, requiring more tangible actions.

Save the Children will continue to engage with the NHRC in the follow-up process and support civil society to collectively monitor the implementation process.



Philippines: Civil society actors recognized as key partners in UPR follow-up

KEY OUTCOMES:

- All the priorities raised by the coalition were taken up in the UPR and 75% were reflected in accepted UPR recommendations
- UPR advocacy reinforced national efforts to pass a Bill in the Senate maintaining the minimum age of criminal responsibility at 15 years old instead of reducing it
- The child rights coalition is a key partner in the Philippines tripartite UPR follow-up mechanism composed of representatives from government, the national human rights institution and civil society

BACKGROUND

The second UPR Working Group on the Philippines took place on 29 May 2012. Through the Philippine NGO Coalition on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (Phil NGO Coalition-CRC), Save the Children and its partners actively engaged in UPR advocacy, in close collaboration with offices in Geneva and in capitals, to ensure that child rights priorities fed into the UPR recommendations and ultimately resulted in legal and policy changes for children. The NGO coalition used the UPR mechanism to strengthen national advocacy goals on the themes of corporal punishment, the minimum age of criminal responsibility, child sexual exploitation and the third optional protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a Communications Procedure (OP3 CRC).

WHAT SAVE THE CHILDREN AND ITS PARTNERS DID

Putting children's rights on the national human rights agenda

The NGO coalition participated in a diplomatic briefing in the Philippines for representatives of 40 embassies organized by PAHRA, the national human rights coalition, in partnership with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). As the space for NGO representation was limited, the NGO coalition was the only voice on children's rights and its participation was crucial to place children as a top priority to consider for the UPR.

Using different advocacy tools to reinforce the messages

Different advocacy tools were used to build interest and support among the embassies, including the screening of a video on child trafficking at the diplomatic briefing, dissemination of an advocacy brief with key recommendations, bilateral meetings and an oral statement at the Human Rights Council. All these efforts bore fruit as several embassies responded with a commitment to support some of the recommendations.

Lobbying the government interagency on children and the Commission on Human Rights

The NGO coalition advocated for the ratification of OP3 CRC in a roundtable discussion organized by the Council for Welfare of Children and through bilateral meetings with the Commission on Human Rights of the Philippines (CHRP). As a result, the Council for Welfare of Children recommended the ratification of the third OPCRC to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Office of the President and the CHRP made an oral statement at the Human Rights Council on this issue during the adoption of the UPR report in September 2012.

Putting the UPR issues at the forefront of the national elections

The four thematic priorities raised in the UPR were at the heart of a nationwide electoral advocacy campaign led by Save the Children and other partners in different parts of the country for the May 2013 elections. Through social media and advocacy targeting the candidates for the election, the NGO coalition created more traction and momentum on these issues through media exposure.

OUTCOMES

A key UPR outcome has been the passing of a Bill by the Senate maintaining the minimum age of criminal responsibility at 15 years old, despite strong attempts by Congress to lower the age to 12 years old. This was the result of the combined efforts of civil society organisations through an advocacy campaign, involvement of the national media, as well as international pressure through the UPR.

Recognised as a competent and independent voice on children's rights by national stakeholders, the NGO coalition was given strategic opportunities to contribute to the UPR follow-up process. Following the UPR session, the NGO Coalition was invited to participate in forums with government, CHRP and a few CSOs representatives to disseminate the recommendations. Recently it was asked to sit in the Technical Working Group responsible for designing the national UPR tri-partite follow-up mechanism, along with the Presidential Committee on Human Rights, which is the government's body responsible for the implementation of human rights treaties, CHRP and PAHRA.

LESSONS LEARNED AND NEXT STEPS

Embedding UPR work into the existing advocacy strategy of civil society organisations and coalitions is crucial in achieving change in country. Leveraging opportunities such as the national elections to mobilise action on the UPR recommendations was instrumental in blocking the proposed amendment to lower the minimum age of criminal responsibility from 15 to 12 years. The NGO coalition plans to use all possible fora to follow-up on relevant UPR recommendations, including in regional forums such as the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN).

An important learning is also the need to inform children's groups about the UPR, and develop ways so they can also participate in the process in the future. In view of submitting a supplementary report to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the NGO coalition has conducted a national consultation with children where they discussed the different recommendations from human rights reporting processes, including the UPR. There is also a plan to disseminate UPR recommendations amongst child-led groups and organize orientation sessions on the UPR mechanism and advocacy.



“As some partner child-led groups are already involved in CRC monitoring, there is already a solid base to engage children in UPR follow-up and it is now a matter of linking CRC and UPR monitoring and advocacy”.

- Minerva Cabiles, Save the Children, Child Rights Governance Advisor

The tri-partite follow-up mechanism composed of representatives from government, the CHRP and civil society representatives (PAHRA) put in place to jointly monitor the implementation of the UPR recommendations is an innovative mechanism that can be capitalised to foster dialogue between these different actors in developing a national plan of action. A series of indicators are being designed to help track progress against the government's commitments. Through the technical Working Group and PARHA, the NGO coalition is actively involved in those discussions and supports the development of indicators for child-focused UPR recommendations.

Pakistan: Engaging children and the media in the UPR

KEY OUTCOMES:

- UPR advocacy was instrumental in speeding up key legal and policy reforms in Pakistan that have been pending for years
- Interaction between the child rights coalition and the media was strengthened
- Child rights issues have gained traction on the national agenda, as reflected by the government's decision to declare and recognise 2013 as the year of children's rights

BACKGROUND

The government of Pakistan has ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and other child-related instruments but there are serious gaps in implementation. The level of awareness of the UPR process among civil society organizations (CSOs) and networks, government departments and the general public in Pakistan was low, contributing to limited implementation of UPR recommendations from the first cycle.

Save the Children worked with a large coalition of 108 partners called the Child Rights Movement (CRM), which includes provincial, national and international actors, to bring out children's voices and the longstanding experiences of CRM members into the UPR process. The UPR of Pakistan was held on 30th October 2012 and the CRM was actively involved throughout the process before and after the UPR session.

WHAT SAVE THE CHILDREN AND ITS PARTNERS DID

The CRM partners conducted children's consultations with 33 children, boys and girls from rural and underserved areas of Pakistan located in Sindh and Punjab provinces, to hear their views and recommendations on children's issues, which were subsequently integrated into the CRM submission. A girl representative from a minority group who took part in the children's consultation was able to raise her concerns and those of her community in bilateral meetings with embassies in Pakistan.

Among the key issues raised were the establishment of an independent child rights institution, budget allocations for children, progress towards the Millennium Development Goals on education, child health, quality education and eradication of harmful child labour.

Parallel advocacy was undertaken towards State representatives in Geneva and Brussels prior to, during and after the UPR session of Pakistan, including through Save the Children's participation in a successful side-event in Geneva targeting Permanent missions and Pakistani media, oral statements before the European Parliament's Sub Committee in Brussels and the Human Rights Council in Geneva. Advocacy workshops were conducted in parallel in Pakistan for the CRM members, government officials and the media to highlight the importance of the UPR mechanism and to urge the government of Pakistan to accept child rights related recommendations.

OUTCOMES

Through their active engagement in the UPR process, Save the Children and its partners were able to influence the review and put children's issues at the centre of the discussions. Seven priority issues raised by the CRM were reflected in the UPR recommendations that the Pakistani government committed to implement.

The UPR of Pakistan has acted as a catalyst and contributed to speeding up national policy and legislative initiatives that have been pending for years, notably:

- In November 2012, one month after the UPR session, the ICT Right to Free and Compulsory Education Act 2012 was passed by the National Assembly, guaranteeing free education to all children aged five to sixteen years.
- In December 2012, the Criminal Law Amendment Bill was approved by the Cabinet and now has to be enacted by National Assembly and the Senate. This law raises child protection standards in juvenile justice, trafficking, sexual abuse and child pornography.
- In March 2013, the National Assembly passed the Prohibition of Corporal Punishment Bill, making this practice punishable by prison sentence. Subsequently, the Bill lapsed as the National Assembly was dissolved before the approval of the Bill by the Senate. However, this decision has laid the groundwork making it easier for civil society to advocate for the Bill's adoption by the incumbent Assembly.
- The government declared and notified the year 2013 as the year of child rights providing further scope for civil society to push the government to fulfil its commitments towards children.

The active engagement of Save the Children and the CRM with the media, including through press releases and press conferences in Islamabad resulted in significant media coverage by leading national newspapers such as the Dawn, the News International, Daily Times, Express Tribune, the Nation and Frontier Post.



“The process of writing, sharing, submitting and doing joint advocacy on the UPR recommendations has raised the profile of the CRM network, creating an environment for joint initiatives and collective ownership of issues. The CRM is now seen as a trusted partner when it comes to children’s issues and is invited by the government departments for meetings to provide inputs and feedback on matters relevant to children.”

- Abdullah Khoso, Save the children, Child Rights Governance Coordinator

LESSONS LEARNED AND NEXT STEPS

These successful outcomes were made possible by a number of factors, including coordinated advocacy at different levels and involvement of the media, but also external factors such as the national elections in May 2013 provided an enabling environment conducive for changes. The challenge is now to ensure that these steps pave the way for more sustainable changes that will make a fundamental difference in the life of children and their communities in Pakistan.

A detailed follow-up plan has been developed by the CRM which includes various advocacy activities targeting authorities at national and provincial level and developing tools to engage children. These include: a booklet on the UPR, a child-friendly version of the UPR outcome, letters to targeted embassies asking them to take up UPR recommendations in their bilateral talks with the Pakistani government and provincial level consultations to discuss implementation of UPR recommendations. The CRM provincial chapters and the media are already involved in these activities, with the dissemination of the booklet to the Prime Minister of Pakistan, the President, the provincial Chief Ministers and Governors, the federal and provincial Chief Secretaries and the Judges of High and Supreme Courts.

The CRM was also asked by the Ministry of Human Rights in Pakistan to support the preparation of a detailed government action-plan for the implementation of child-focused UPR recommendations and has submitted a proposal. A similar proposal is being developed for the Commissioner for Children, sitting in the Federal Ombudsman Office, which is now taking an interest in the UPR and will support the monitoring and advocacy efforts of the coalition.

Republic of Korea: Building sustained relationships with embassies through the UPR

KEY OUTCOMES:

- 16.24% increase in the number of child-focused UPR recommendations pro rata compared to the first UPR cycle.
- Regular interaction between embassies and members of the UPR Child Rights Network as a result of the UPR process.
- The UPR has opened new funding opportunities for coalition members and new partnerships for Save the Children.

BACKGROUND

Save the Children and two national organisations formed the coalition “UPR Child Rights Network” and undertook joint UPR reporting and advocacy for the second UPR of the Republic of Korea, held on 25 October 2012.

The strong engagement with embassies was instrumental in building momentum and ownership of the UPR process by actors at the national level, paving the way for increased quality interaction between civil society actors and embassies.

WHAT SAVE THE CHILDREN AND ITS PARTNERS DID

Mainstreamed child rights within the human rights coalition’s submission

Save the children and partners engaged with the national human rights NGO coalition and made sure that children’s perspectives were mainstreamed throughout the broader human rights discussion.

Developed a joint submission and advocacy brief focusing on child rights

Save the Children’s global and national priorities were included in the UPR submission and advocacy brief with specific recommendations on investment in children, physical and humiliating punishment and birth registration.

Intensive lobbying at national level, in capitals and in Geneva

The UPR Child Rights Network held several diplomatic briefings with embassies in the Republic of Korea followed by bilateral meetings with Ministry of Foreign Affairs in capitals and 30 permanent missions in Geneva.

OUTCOMES

Extensive advocacy efforts at national and international level brought a higher profile and greater visibility to children’s rights in the Republic of Korea and signalled to many States involved in the UPR that these concerns needed heightened attention from the national authorities.

During the UPR Working Group session, the government of the Republic of Korea made child-specific commitments, including the commitment to prioritise allocation of resources for children and to move toward the full prohibition of corporal punishment in all settings. The fact that birth registration featured prominently in UPR recommendations brought international attention to the issue and reinvigorated the national debate and the need to build a national campaign on birth registration.

The UPR process also provided a platform to engage with a broader range of actors in the Republic of Korea, laying the foundation for strong and sustained relationships between embassies, human rights organizations and child rights actors. Some positive benefits can already be highlighted:

- Following the UPR process, an inter-embassy group was formed, which continues to meet periodically with Save the Children and its partners to share information on children's issues and discuss opportunities for collaboration.
- Some embassies are also using the UPR to champion children's issues at the national level. For example, the Belgian ambassador and the deputy ambassador spoke at two conferences organised by members of the UPR Child Rights Network.
- New funding has been secured as a result of the collaboration with embassies.
- Save the Children was approached by the National Human Rights Commission of the Republic of Korea to hold a conference on birth registration.

LESSONS LEARNED AND NEXT STEPS

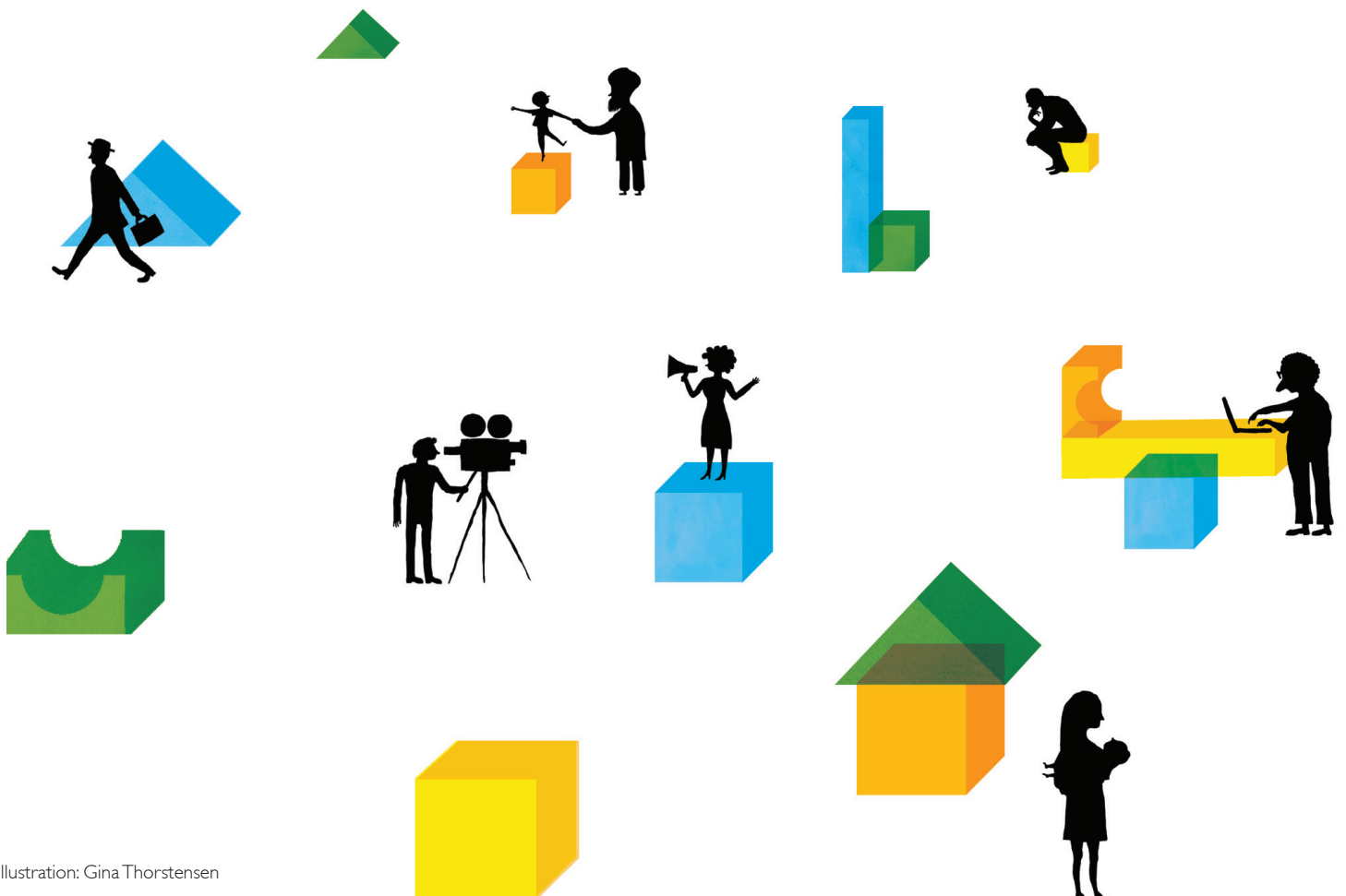
A key success factor was the strong commitment from Save the Children and its partners to engage with embassies at the national level, in addition to advocacy with missions in Geneva and Ministry of Foreign Affairs in capitals. This helped keep the momentum going around the follow-up to the UPR recommendations and added political pressure on the government to deliver on its commitments.

The inter-embassy group will continue to operate as a platform for discussing children's issues with child rights organizations. The latter will continue to encourage embassies to bring up the UPR recommendations when meeting with the government of the Republic of Korea and push for effective implementation.



“The UPR was a highly positive experience in terms of raising issues internationally and solidifying relationships while also forging new connections with other CSOs and government officials. The UPR recommendations can serve as a future advocacy tool with embassies on issues where they may not normally be involved.”

- Ross Oke, Coordinator for the UPR Child Rights Network



Peru: Integrating the UPR recommendations in the national policy framework

KEY OUTCOMES:

- 31% of the UPR recommendations are child-focused and 95% of these recommendations were accepted by the government
- All the UPR recommendations have been incorporated in the new Human Rights National Plan
- Child rights networks used the UPR to strengthen quality interaction with other civil society groups
- Linkages between the UPR process, CRC Committee monitoring and the Inter-American Human Rights system were reinforced.

BACKGROUND

In Peru, Save the Children and child rights partners have longstanding experience in child rights monitoring, through ongoing analysis and review of the status of children's rights and supplementary reporting to the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC Committee).

Save the Children as a member of the child rights NGO coalition, decided to expand the collaboration beyond its traditional partners to include women's rights NGOs, in order to form the "NGO Working Group on Child Rights" for the UPR of Peru. This coalition is composed of 17 national and international organisations. Save the Children saw in the UPR a complementary mechanism to strengthen follow-up on the CRC Concluding Observations and hold the government to account on its commitments to children.

WHAT SAVE THE CHILDREN AND ITS PARTNERS DID

The NGO Working Group produced a joint child-focused submission with explicit references to the UPR recommendations from the first cycle, the CRC Concluding Observations and reports from the Ombudsman's Office. The objective was to build upon the vast body of recommendations developed by national and international human rights mechanisms on the situation of child rights in Peru. Child rights recommendations were also included in a separate submission produced by the coalition of women's NGOs.

Coordinated advocacy was undertaken with diplomatic missions at both the national and international level, by means of written briefs and oral presentations, with specific asks relating to child protection, access to justice, health and education issues, including the revision of the children's code to prohibit all forms of violence against children and the repeal of regulations limiting access to sexual and reproductive health services for adolescents. The NGO Working Group also reinforced the messages by including them in their advocacy toward the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

The second UPR Working Group on Peru took place on 1st November 2012. Following the UPR session, the NGO Working Group carried out follow-up advocacy with national institutions and pushed for the integration of the UPR recommendations into the National Human Rights Plan by sending a letter to the Ministry of Justice and organising a bilateral meeting with the Vice Minister of Human Rights. They also lobbied members of Congress to revise the Children's Code in line with international standards.

OUTCOMES

Through the UPR, Save the Children and its partners in Peru succeeded in moving children's issues higher up the agenda, with 30% increase in the number of child-focused recommendations between the first and second cycle. During the second cycle, 42 recommendations were focused on children (32% of the total number of recommendations), 40 of which were accepted by the government. At national level, the Vice Minister announced that all UPR recommendations have been incorporated in the Human Rights National Plan, making it easier for civil society to monitor the implementation of the recommendations and to hold the government to account.

Save the Children expanded and deepened its collaboration with other NGOs in Peru, with which it had never worked before, such as women's groups and groups working on sexual and reproductive health to name but a few. Despite its ad hoc nature, the NGO Working Group created a strong alliance of NGOs where all members found common interests and agreed to pursue their work together in monitoring and pushing for the effective implementation of the recommendations. NGOs such as Amnesty International have contacted the NGO Working Group to explore collaboration on advocacy activities and have now pooled their resources to have a stronger voice.

As a member of both the child rights coalition and the NGO Working Group, Save the Children has also helped bring these two groups together by encouraging cross-linkages between themes, activities and members of both groups. For example, the child-led groups which took part in UPR advocacy within the NGO Working Group are now involved in preparing a supplementary report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

LESSONS LEARNED AND NEXT STEPS

Bringing together different constituencies to speak with one voice through common child rights messages in the UPR reporting and advocacy was key in obtaining these UPR outcomes in Peru. Indeed, child rights concerns and recommendations were both included in the child-focused submission and in the women's NGOs submission and advocacy which contributed to achieving a high number of UPR recommendations on children's rights.

Save the Children has included UPR follow-up in its country programme strategy and will continue to work with its partners from the NGO Working Group and the child rights coalition to push for the implementation of the recommendations.

The launch of the National Human Rights Plan will be an opportunity to build momentum on priority issues raised in the UPR and organise follow-up meetings with relevant institutions. The follow-up plan will also include the dissemination of the recommendations among civil society networks and children, the development of a child-friendly version of the UPR recommendations and the publication of a mid-term report.

Bangladesh: Pushing the Child Rights Governance agenda through the UPR

KEY OUTCOMES:

- 75% of the issues raised by Save the Children and its partners were reflected in the UPR accepted recommendations
- UPR advocacy has acted as a catalyst to boost national advocacy around the Child Rights Act and to secure political commitments for child-sensitive budgeting
- Danish and EU delegations in Bangladesh have committed to include UPR recommendations in their funding strategy

BACKGROUND

Bangladesh has made considerable progress over the last years in improving children's welfare and access to basic services such as health and education. Nevertheless, the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs - which is the key coordination and monitoring body of children's rights - remains the least resourced Ministry in Bangladesh.

Save the Children supports the Child Rights Governance Assembly (CRGA) in Bangladesh, an advocacy network of 17 organizations including children and youth organizations, to promote good governance in favour of children's rights through different advocacy initiatives.

The second UPR of Bangladesh, held in Geneva on 29 April 2013, provided an opportunity for the CRGA to push for four key priorities: the appointment of an Ombudsman for Children, the introduction of a child-friendly budget, the amendment of the Children's Act to bring it into line with the UNCRC and the enactment of the Education Act.

WHAT SAVE THE CHILDREN AND ITS PARTNERS DID

The CRGA carried out a number of consultations and community group discussions with local and national stakeholders including health workers, teachers, parents and child rights organizations, in order to identify priority issues for the UPR submission and advocacy.

Children aged between 12 years and 18 years were also consulted during a one day consultation on the UPR. These children are members of the National Children Taskforce - a child-led organization supported by Save the Children and recognized by the government. The National Children Taskforce has a Secretariat in all districts and includes child researchers, child journalists and child advocates.

The CRGA used different avenues to bring forward their UPR advocacy messages including through bilateral meetings with embassies in Bangladesh and missions in Geneva. The CRGA also reiterated its advocacy messages in a letter to the Ministry of Planning and invited the Prime Minister's Advisor for Public Administration to attend their annual meeting. Furthermore, they attended the UPR Working Group session and participated in a side-event that focused on assessing outcomes of the UPR session.

Following the UPR session, CRGA developed a child-friendly booklet on the UPR, explaining its relevance for children and the content of the child-focused UPR recommendations addressed to the Government of Bangladesh.

OUTCOMES

The Children's Act was enacted by Parliament on 16 June 2013, two months after the UPR Working Group on Bangladesh. Save the Children, together with the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) and the United Children's Fund (UNICEF), made substantial contributions to the text of the Act, including ensuring compliance with the definition of the child in the UNCRC. The passing of this piece of legislation represents a significant step forward

for children's rights in Bangladesh and raises the standard of protection for children. The UPR played a vital role in building momentum around the issue at national level and in expediting the process.

Other CRGA priority issues were reflected in the UPR recommendations and all were accepted by the government of Bangladesh. These include the establishment of an Ombudsman for children, the enactment of the Education Act and the increase of the minimum age of criminal responsibility to 12 years.

The advocacy efforts on a child-friendly budget have led to the Ministry of Finance and a commitment by the finance minister to introduce a child-friendly budget starting in the fiscal year 2014-2015 during his budget speech 2013.

CRGA's advocacy towards the Danish and EU delegations in Bangladesh has contributed to increase the delegations' awareness of the UPR mechanism and the importance they attach to the process. As a result they have committed to include follow-up to the UPR recommendations in their funding strategy, thus opening up new funding opportunities for Save the Children and partners.

LESSONS LEARNED AND NEXT STEPS

The experience in Bangladesh showed how instrumental child rights organizations speaking with one voice was in securing UPR outcomes. Having a prominent national figure to champion the CRGA issues also gave further strength and recognition to these efforts. Indeed, the CRGA member who took the lead in the UPR advocacy was a respected public figure and a former Advisor to the Interim Government of Bangladesh, with a large network of supporters within civil society.

Many child-focused recommendations are broad and unfocused indicating that the civil society actors must engage even more with the embassies between UPR cycles to encourage them to make clear and specific recommendations in the next cycle.

CRGA follow-up plans include translation and dissemination of the recommendations in Bengali, raising awareness within civil society of the importance of child rights monitoring and the role of civil society in the UPR process.

Children are key actors in this process and existing networks provide avenues to engage children across the country. With the support of Save the Children, members of the National Children Taskforce are developing a child-led supplementary report for the upcoming review of Bangladesh before the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child that links to the child-focused UPR recommendations.

Building awareness of the relevant Ministries including the Ministry of Women and Children's Affairs, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Social Welfare, is also essential to strengthen ownership of the UPR process at national level, as a key building block towards effective implementation of the UPR recommendations.

Save the Children and the CRGA are continuing to engage with embassies to ensure that follow-up to child-focused UPR recommendations, in particular those on CRGA priority areas, are included in their funding strategies for Bangladesh.



Zambia: Bringing the voices of children and local communities in the UPR

KEY OUTCOMES:

- 80% of the issues raised by the coalition were reflected in UPR accepted recommendations
- UPR recommendations on the health budget have helped reinforce national advocacy efforts leading to an increase in the national health budget
- UPR advocacy has helped to empower local champions to be the voice of communities in various forums

BACKGROUND

Save the Children, through its EVERYONE campaign “Local to Global” project, is piloting an innovative model of advocacy linking community level child rights programming to national, regional and global level advocacy work. Through a combination of capacity building, child rights monitoring and advocacy, empowered children, health workers and their communities can become agents of change and get their voices heard in local, national and international platforms. Zambia is one of the pilot countries where such an approach is being implemented, along with India, Afghanistan and Yemen.

The second UPR of Zambia, that took place on 30th October 2012, was an opportunity to build synergies between child rights governance and health programmes and advocacy through the use of the UPR accountability mechanism.

WHAT SAVE THE CHILDREN AND ITS PARTNERS DID

Developing a child-informed report to bring out the voices of children in the UPR

Save the Children and its partners organized a consultation with 52 children involved in school councils and clubs, aged between 8 and 18 years old, from different provinces of Zambia. The purpose of this consultation was to inform children about the UPR process, how it is relevant for them and to hear their views about children's rights in Zambia. To ensure a wider representation of children, members of the coalition working with children used their networks to reach out to more children. 100 children provided input to the UPR submission and their recommendations were included at the beginning of the UPR submission drafted by the child rights coalition.

The UPR submission was shared with the relevant ministries and government departments, embassies and media agencies to influence the State report and the recommendations in order to get children's issues included.



“The process of collecting information from other children was very informative. Children from different parts of the country made presentations and later we agreed on what we wanted to be in the report. This was a good experience for me. I request that the organizers share with us whatever the government will decide to do or not to do from what we have suggested.”

- A child involved in the consultation for the UPR submission

Advocacy linking local, regional and international level

Various activities were undertaken at different levels to reinforce these messages, including:

- Diplomatic briefings in Lusaka with key development donor agencies, embassies and international agencies such as the International Organization for Migration.
- Human Rights Council side-event in Geneva on budgeting for children's health where a local champion working in the District Office of the Ministry of Health and Save the Children's representative advocated for increased budget allocation for child health and more transparency in the budgeting process.
- A local champion attended the Pan African Fit for Children conference in November 2012 in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, where he reiterated UPR advocacy messages on health budgeting.
- Together with the children's coalition, representatives of the child-led media organization "Children News Agencies" met with Parliamentarians after the UPR session and disseminated child-focused UPR recommendations through their blogs.

OUTCOMES

The government of Zambia accepted several recommendations relating to budget allocations for maternal and child health, investment in education in rural areas and the prohibition of corporal punishment in all settings.

The UPR recommendations on the health budget have helped reinforce national advocacy efforts carried out by Save the Children and its partners, leading to an increase in the national budget for the health sector from 9.3% in 2012 to 11.3% in 2013.

Moreover, the active engagement of Save the Children's local champion in advocacy led to a commitment from the Zambian Ambassador to the African Union to champion maternal, newborn and child health with Save the Children.

Engaging the Parliamentarians in the UPR process has also proven successful in building their support for children's issues which will be useful to push for legal and budgetary reforms. After the meeting with the children's coalition and representatives from the Children News Agencies, one Parliamentarian stated that "As Members of Parliament who have attended this meeting we promise to support any issue concerning children that will come before the house."

LESSONS LEARNED AND NEXT STEPS

These successful achievements would not have been possible without joined efforts at all levels. To ensure continuous engagement of coalition members in the process, getting commitment from the highest level to include UPR advocacy into the organizations' work plans is crucial.

The importance of rigorous evidence presented by a credible local champion was also highlighted as a key success factor of the UPR advocacy in Zambia. "The Government was ready to accept the recommendations because the issues and the recommendations raised were based on facts" said Mwansa Malupande, Save the Children CRG coordinator.

The participation of children in the UPR submission and in advocacy towards Parliamentarians was critical to identify and prioritize issues and ensure that they truly reflect the realities experienced by children. The coalition aims to disseminate UPR outcomes to all the children who took part in the consultation and explore follow-up activities with them.

The children's coalition is currently developing its follow-up plan which includes awareness raising activities, dissemination and advocacy components. Plans include the translation of the UPR child-focused recommendations into local languages, the dissemination of newsletters on UPR follow-up in schools, the organization of child-friendly audiences with local and traditional leaders, and advocacy meetings with embassies and Parliamentarians.

Mali: Connecting the dots between humanitarian and child rights advocacy

KEY OUTCOMES:

- 83% of Save the Children priorities are reflected in accepted UPR recommendations
- Coordinated advocacy on Mali strengthened synergies between the UPR and the Human Rights Council discussions and contributed to the adoption of the Human Rights Council resolution creating an Independent Expert on Mali

BACKGROUND

The second Universal Periodic Review of Mali took place in January 2013, in the midst of a conflict and profound humanitarian crisis in the country. The situation in Mali was also on the agenda of the Human Rights Council, among the issues requiring special attention from the international community. This context brought significant political momentum around Mali, making the UPR a timely opportunity to get political commitments for children at the highest levels.

Both the UPR and the Human Rights Council were used in parallel by Save the Children as platforms to voice child-specific concerns linked to the humanitarian crisis, including child protection and education, but also to address structural issues regarding investment in children's health and nutrition.

Save the Children's engagement in the UPR of Mali exemplifies how we work together across different sectors within our organization, linking advocacy on humanitarian, child rights governance, child protection, health and education, but also how we can use several human rights mechanisms in a coordinated manner in order for these bodies to mutually reinforce each other and ensure maximum impact for children.

WHAT SAVE THE CHILDREN DID

With the deteriorating political climate and instability in Mali, Save the Children opted first for bilateral advocacy towards State representatives in Bamako and Geneva and UN agencies. A Save the Children country office representative met with key stakeholders from the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) and the Global Nutrition Cluster.

Another advocacy opportunity was the Human Rights Council session in March 2013, two months after the UPR session, where Save the Children reiterated key messages on child protection and nutrition in Mali through different platforms. We spoke in a side-event focusing on nutrition in fragile states, held bilateral meetings with the African Group Coordinator leading the Human Rights Council resolution on Mali and made public statements to influence the Human Rights Council debate and outcome.

Save the Children also mobilised key national actors such as the Malian coalition for children's rights, COMADE, to take the lead in the follow-up to the child-focused UPR recommendations. The President of the COMADE lobbied the "Haut Conseil des Collectivités" an advisory body to the President of Mali to press child protection issues with the national authorities and engaged with the media through a television interview.

OUTCOMES

As a result of Save the Children's coordinated advocacy towards the UPR Working Group and the Human Rights Council, child protection concerns moved up the agenda in Mali. As a result, several UPR recommendations relating to the involvement of children in armed conflict, child labour and trafficking were all accepted by the Malian government.

Save the Children's quiet and public advocacy on Mali at both national and international levels also contributed to the adoption of a Human Rights Council resolution creating a new Independent Expert on Mali. It is a one-year mandate with the function to monitor and investigate the human rights violations committed during the crisis. Specific references to recruitment of children and sexual abuse of children were also included in the resolution.

Through the UPR, Save the Children in Mali raised its profile at national level by strengthening relationships with civil society partners, notably through the creation of a unique partnership with the COMADE. The latter is a well-respected civil society representative in Mali with a voice and entries in the decision making process. This relationship is likely to facilitate Save the Children's interaction with national authorities and contribute to improving the visibility and recognition of its programmes on the ground.

LESSONS LEARNED AND NEXT STEPS

This example shows the importance of using coordinated approach that links up advocacy at national and international level towards different bodies and between different thematic sectors in order to galvanise political commitments and outcomes.

Save the Children is supporting the COMADE in developing a three-year follow-up plan including dissemination, awareness raising and advocacy components, involving national institutions, embassies, funding partners and the media. This plan will also include a child rights situational analysis and linking follow-up on UPR recommendations, the Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the recommendations of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC). Children will also be key partners in the follow-up, through the engagement of the national Parliament of Children and the "association for the promotion of youth and children as communicators" in follow-up activities.

Save the Children also plans to engage with the newly appointed Independent Expert on Mali to keep children's rights high on the agenda of the Human Rights Council and reinforce national advocacy efforts.





Child Rights Governance

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