

Facts and suggestions on how to promote the CRC

General measures of implementation for the Convention on the Rights of the Child

Children have become more visible over the last 20 years and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) has led to a shift towards considering children as human beings with rights of their own.

With the adoption of the Convention, children's rights were no longer an option, to be granted at the discretion of adults or out of mere sympathy – they became an obligation. The Convention has the highest ratification rates of all major Human Rights Treaties with signatures from 193 States. In addition, two Optional Protocols, seeking to strengthen the rights set out in the Convention, were adopted in 2000.

By ratifying the CRC, the State becomes obliged under international law to implement its provisions. The State also becomes obliged to report the progress to a monitoring committee. This Committee on the Rights of the Child publishes its interpretation of different articles in the Convention, in the form of General Comments.

In September 2003, the Committee published its General Comment No. 5 on general measures of implementation for the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This gives a broad outline of ways in which the Convention can be implemented, a number of which are listed below.

In September 2007, the annual Days of General Discussion of the Committee on the Rights of the Child were devoted to elaborate on issues raised by Article 4 of the CRC, especially the second part.

Article 4 states that by ratifying the CRC, your government has promised that they “shall undertake all appropriate legislative, administrative, and other measures for the implementation of the rights recognized in the present Convention.”

They have also promised that with regard to economic, social and cultural rights, they “shall undertake such measures to the maximum extent of their available resources and, where needed, within the framework of international co-operation.”

2009 marks the 20th Anniversary of the CRC and Save the Children calls upon all governments to recommit to the Convention of the Rights of the Child by focusing on three very important areas: legislation, resources and monitoring.

This paper intends to give you ideas on how to further strengthen children's rights in your country. More facts can be found in the impact study on the follow-up and monitoring mechanisms of the CRC, that is coming soon.

Below are the Committee's comments of the States parties' obligations to develop general measures of implementation. Together with each comment you will find a couple of examples of what you can do.

States shall continue to develop a comprehensive national strategy in relation to all the rights set out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

What you can do:

- Call for a comprehensive, rights-based national strategy or national plans of action for children based on the CRC.
- Organize widespread consultations and debates with children, civil society organisations and local communities.

States shall establish bodies or mechanisms to promote coordination, monitoring and evaluation of activities throughout all sectors of government, and report periodically on achievements and existing difficulties.

What you can do:

- Give advice to establish key responsibilities within government and systems to follow-up.
- Coordinate activities between government and civil society in order to ensure that the CRC is being implemented effectively.

States shall ensure that all legislation is fully compatible with the Convention by incorporating it into domestic law or ensuring that its rights take priority in case of conflict with national legislation.

What you can do:

- Propose comprehensive review of domestic legislation.
- Demand that there are effective, child-sensitive procedures available to children and their representatives.

States shall increase visibility of children in policy development processes throughout government's ministries and departments by introducing child impact assessments and evaluations.

What you can do:

- Monitor and suggest that child impact assessments of any proposed law, policies or budget allocations are made.
- Identify notorious issues and any gaps in information or expertise.

States shall review government spending to determine the portion of public funds spent on children and to ensure that these resources are being used effectively.

What you can do:

- Check that the proportion of government spending on children includes a breakdown of how the money spent on children is distributed.
- Monitor the incomes and the material, human and organizational resources that are available at central and local levels and how these resources are used to maximum extent.

States shall set up systems to ensure that sufficient data are collected and used to improve the situation of all children in each jurisdiction.

What you can do:

- Suggest that data is collected and integrated into the public systems and used by governmental bodies on a regular basis to inform planning and policy-making.
- Check that this data on children of all ages is collected without discrimination.

States shall disseminate information and raise awareness on the Convention by providing training to all those involved in government policy making and working with or for children.

What you can do:

- Advocate that the Convention is made widely known, by appropriate and active means, to adults and children alike.
- Make child friendly material and information on Children's Rights and the Convention of the Convention on the Rights of the Child available in school.

States shall strengthen cooperation with civil society, including children and seek international cooperation in the process of implementing and raising awareness of child rights.

What you can do:

- Support and participate in national networks for the promotion of children's rights.
- Meet regularly with the government and collaborate on implementation initiatives, and with all sectors of society.

States shall set up an independent office – ombudsman, commission or other institutions – to promote and protect children's rights.

What you can do:

- Recommend the establishment of national human rights institutions which independently monitor compliance with the CRC.
- The office should be independent of government influence in carrying out their role and that, preferably, such bodies be accountable to legislative bodies rather than to central governments.