

NGO Group for the Convention
on the Rights of the Child



2008 Annual Report

The NGO Group is a global network of 77 national and international NGOs committed to ensuring that all children fully enjoy their rights as defined by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The NGO Group provides a coordinated platform for NGO action and plays a central role in key child rights developments at the international level.

The NGO Group works through its secretariat and thematic working groups to fulfil its mission **to promote, implement and monitor the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child**. It advocates and raises public awareness of the importance of the CRC. In addition, the NGO Group promotes the full implementation of the CRC through its work with national and international NGOs throughout the world.

It is governed by an Executive Committee which is elected by the members of the network. The Executive Committee provides the strategic direction and supervises the work of the Secretariat and the working groups.

Objectives

Through its Secretariat and its members, the NGO Group works:

- To advocate and raise public awareness of the importance of the Convention.
- To promote and facilitate the full implementation of the Convention, through specific programmes and actions.
- To promote the active and ethical participation of children in all aspects of implementation and monitoring of the Convention, and also in the activities of the NGO Group itself, in line with article 12 of the Convention.
- To facilitate the flow of information between the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the relevant United Nations agencies and the NGO community.
- To facilitate cooperation and information-sharing globally within the NGO community on the application and monitoring of the implementation of the Convention.
- To draw up policies and strategies and undertake actions in the fields covered by the Convention.
- To contribute to the monitoring of the implementation of the Convention by the Committee on the Rights of the Child.
- To facilitate the creation of and support the work of national coalitions for the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

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PREFACE

Viewing the rights of children through Latin American eyes



We encounter different challenges every year and tackling them firmly with true conviction unites us with the international community as we jointly defend human rights.

When considering the achievements of 2008, we must review the stark contrasts that characterise Latin America. We need to take into account the fact that growing inequity and the increasing numbers of children born below the poverty line go hand-in-hand with considerable advances, including in national judiciary frameworks. In addition, decision-makers are increasingly incorporating human/child rights in their discourse and in state summit agendas.

It is interesting to highlight the role of NGOs in defending the rights of children, and the impact of these NGOs in defining policies for childhood in Latin America. In virtually all the countries in the region, there are national NGO coalitions for children and adolescents which have been created to monitor the progress in implementing the Convention. Through their mobilisation and commitment, they generate many successful outcomes for children. These NGOs connect through the regional network for Latin America and the Caribbean (REDLAMYC), which is in itself a remarkable result for civil society. Through this network, coalitions can exchange views, learn, contribute, demand and monitor child rights. But mainly, it is civil society, children and adolescents who speak out when children's rights are being violated. All of this shows maturity in the region, while demonstrating its capacity to be organised, well informed and in a position to create strategic alliances to ensure common action. But

above all, perhaps the most relevant achievement is to have strengthened, with a regional focus, the capacity and motivation of each of the countries to continue generating change in favour of children and adolescents.

In order to consolidate national and regional monitoring and its impact on children, it has been essential to use the UN human rights system and the various instruments it has generated. Our collaboration with, and support from, the NGO Group has helped strengthen the reporting process and ensure that we engage with the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Through this link between national coalitions and the Committee, we have been able to bring national child rights concerns to the international level and use the system to advance child rights in our region and countries.

However, despite the many advances, there are still serious challenges to the full implementation of the Convention. One of the key issues is the insufficient investment in policies for children and adolescents as well as a lack of political will to carry out real fundamental change. We must sadly recognise that in the 21st century millions of children continue to suffer from the widespread violation of their rights. Thus only if we – governments, civil society organisations, children, adolescents, agencies and international institutions – fulfil our responsibilities together, will the Convention bear fruit and lead to concrete changes. With this in mind, we must overcome our differences and commit ourselves to guarantee a world where every child and adolescent can fully enjoy all of their rights.

Dr. Jorge Freyre

Coordinator General of Red latinoamericana y caribeña por la defensa de los derechos de los niños, niñas y adolescentes, REDLAMYC

Coordinator of Child Rights in the NGO Gurises Unidos



Introduction from the President



Despite the continual success in spreading the understanding and adherence to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), children's rights continue to be ignored and violated throughout the world. With

a mandate to unite civil society organisations in promoting child rights globally, the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child has a complex and challenging task.

Given the extent of its potential role, the NGO Group has been strategic in its approach to child rights. It has focused on ensuring effective interaction between national and international NGOs and the Committee on the Rights of the Child by facilitating the reporting process of the CRC. Of equal importance is the role it has played as a platform for its member organisations to collaborate on joint actions and advocacy on specific child rights issues.

While maintaining its core focus in 2008, the NGO Group also stepped up the quantity and quality of its work thanks to several factors. It held its first elections of the Executive Committee, strengthened the secretariat, further defined the work of its thematic working groups and maintained a stable portfolio of funds. In addition, the NGO Group increased its visibility by developing a logo, a website and new practical tools for NGOs to engage with the Committee on the Rights of the Child. These developments resulted in several noteworthy achievements. 2008 saw an increase in quantity and quality of reports on the OPAC and the OPSC as well as a more active participation of children in the reporting process. In addition, child rights were higher on the agenda of the Human Rights Council as well as being discussed in the Universal Periodic Review. Through the advocacy and campaigning of

one of the working groups, the proposal of an optional protocol for a communications procedure for the CRC has gained support from NGOs, the Committee on the Rights of the Child and several States parties. In addition, the NGO Group was one of the four organisers of the World Congress III against the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents. In relation to the latter, the NGO Group linked the work of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the perspectives of NGO Group members and national child rights coalitions to the Congress.

Having supported the Committee's request for 2 chambers to address the backlog of reports, the NGO Group will intensify its work with national coalitions to report to the Committee in 2009. In order to handle this increase in reporting, the new opportunities with the Human Rights Council, the campaign for the optional protocol and of course the 20th anniversary of the CRC, the NGO Group strives to secure additional resources. Moreover, the NGO Group will try and further mobilise its members, broaden its membership to national coalitions in the South and involve more youth-led organisations. To achieve this the NGO Group will develop a new visionary and effective strategic plan and strengthen communications with its members, partners and donors.

All these achievements were made possible thanks to the commitment of our secretariat, Executive Committee and member organisations as well as the support of our partners and donors. On behalf of the network, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to all those who supported the work of the NGO Group in 2008 and hope to continue working together in future.

Lennart Reinius

President of the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child



1. Enhancing NGO engagement with the Committee on the Rights of the Child

1.1 Building the capacity of national child rights coalitions

To assist in the effective monitoring of the CRC and its two Protocols, the NGO Group continued to support the creation and strengthening of national coalitions of NGOs through national and regional workshops. In 2008, the NGO Group trained national NGOs on the CRC reporting process and mainstreaming child rights in the broader UN human rights system in Spain and Ukraine as well as during a regional workshop in Uruguay. International training courses organised by the University of Ghent, the International Service for Human Rights and UNICEF provided additional opportunities for training national NGOs.

As local NGOs are rarely organised in coalitions in Central and Eastern Europe, leading to less comprehensive submissions to the Committee, the NGO Group focused on providing training to organisations from that region through regional workshops held in Hungary and Romania. As Bulgaria, Georgia, Serbia, Moldova and Lithuania reported to the Committee in 2008 and five other countries from the region will be examined in 2009, one of the NGO Group's priorities was to strengthen the capacity of NGOs in this part of Europe. The following represent some of the collaborative efforts at national, regional and international level.

NATIONAL LEVEL

Capacity-building workshop on the CRC in Ukraine

Having reported on the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (OPSC) in 2007, Ukrainian NGOs wanted to set up a more formal network to strengthen their capacity and coordinate their efforts concerning child rights. In July, a workshop with 26 national NGOs from nine different regions was organised to create a platform for networking, strengthen knowledge about the reporting process, develop an action plan to coordinate efforts for the next alternative report (due in 2010), and think of ways to lobby for child rights at national level. In addition to



Panellists at the NGO forum for the rights of the child in Romania

helping the NGOs plan the workshop and train the NGOs on the CRC reporting process, the NGO Group encouraged the organisers to invite a Georgian NGO¹ to share their recent experience in reporting to the Committee. As a result, the representative from Everychild² Georgia was invited to explain the practical aspects of preparing an alternative report and the impact of this process at national level. As most participants were community-based service providers with limited knowledge about the CRC and its reporting process, the Georgian experience helped them understand how they could use the international reporting mechanism to advocate for child rights at national level.

Sharing lessons learnt with the Spanish coalition

As the government was finalising its report on the implementation of the CRC, the Spanish coalition, *Plataforma de Infancia España*, invited the NGO Group to its General Assembly to share lessons learnt in effectively preparing reports; interacting with the Committee; and the impact of the reporting process at national level. The General Assembly was attended by 44 NGO representatives from 28 organisations including the UNICEF National Committee. As a result, the mem-

¹ The NGO Group sponsored the participation of the Georgian NGO.

² This NGO was one of the members of the group of NGOs which prepared a report for the Committee.

bers of the coalition increased their awareness of the key role they can play in monitoring and implementing the CRC and its Protocols.

REGIONAL LEVEL

Fostering partnership at the NGO Forum for the Rights of the Child in Romania

In October, Save the Children Romania hosted the biannual forum for European child rights coalitions and NGOs with participation from 23 countries. The eight working groups were divided between two themes: 'Monitoring, working in coalitions and advocacy'³ and 'Working in coalitions'. As the first theme covered the main areas of work of the NGO Group, it was asked to moderate the working group on reporting to other mechanisms, namely the Human Rights Council's (HRC) Universal Periodic Review (UPR). Following the workshop, the national NGOs had a better understanding of the HRC/UPR and how they could participate in the process. The NGO Group also took the opportunity to meet individual NGOs whose countries were due to report in the near future. During these meetings, information was provided on deadlines, the reporting process and the assistance offered by the NGO Group. The NGO Group will be involved in the steering committee for the next forum in 2010.

The role of national coalitions in fulfilling child rights in Latin America

In July, the NGO Group participated in the II Regional Forum of National Coalitions (Montevideo, Uruguay) organised by REDLAMYC, Save the Children Sweden's regional Office and the *Comité de los derechos del niño* (the Uruguayan child rights coalition). The aim of the forum was to discuss how national child rights coalitions have contributed to the effective fulfillment of child rights in the Americas. The 36 participants included representatives from national coalitions from Argentina, Brazil, Costa Rica, El Salvador, Chile, Ecuador, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Paraguay, Venezuela and Uruguay, Ms Rosa Maria Ortiz (member of the Committee), the regional representative of the NGO Advisory Council for the Violence Study and the Inter-american Institute for the Child. During the 5-day workshop, the NGO Group was part of the panel on the relationship between NGOs and the Committee on the Rights of the Child. The NGO Group provided

³ The first theme covered the following themes: reporting to the Committee, reporting to other international and regional monitoring mechanisms (e.g. Universal Periodic Review) and child participation in monitoring their rights.



Jorge Freyre presenting panellists during the forum in Uruguay

information on the reporting status for the countries in the region, the best practices in reporting on the CRC and its Protocols, the opportunities to mainstream child rights in the broader UN system, the campaign for a communications procedure and the Committee's elections. During side meetings, the NGO Group discussed a possible strategy to promote candidates from the region for the Committee elections and met with national coalitions due to report in the near future to discuss the reporting process.

INTERNATIONAL LEVEL

Providing a platform for national NGOs to discuss the follow-up of concluding observations

To enhance effective NGO engagement with the Committee and ensure the follow-up of the Committee's concluding observations at national level, the NGO Group organised NGO forums during the 3 CRC pre-sessions to bring together national coalitions to share their experience. These meetings provided a platform to exchange best practices and understand how other networks resolve similar challenges, as well as to discuss their plans to follow-up the Committee's recommendations. In addition, the NGO Group provided information to child rights NGOs on how to effectively engage with other UN human rights mechanisms.

In total 35 NGO representatives attended the NGO forums in February, June and October 2008 from the following countries: the Philippines, Bulgaria, the



NGO representatives from Korea, the Philippines and Bulgaria attending the NGO forum in Geneva

Republic of Korea, the United Kingdom, Uganda, Austria, Tanzania, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Chad, Malawi, Moldova and the Netherlands. As a basis for discussion, the NGO Group asked each coalition to prepare a presentation highlighting their best practices, challenges and lessons learnt in preparing alternative reports, working in national coalitions and plans to follow-up the Committee's concluding observations. As most of these NGOs were not familiar with the broader UN human rights system, the NGO Group also provided information on how to mainstream child rights in other treaty bodies, UN special procedure mandate holders and the HRC's Universal Periodic Review.

Sharing NGO experiences at the International Interdisciplinary course of 'Children's Rights in a Globalized World' (Ghent, Belgium)

As part of the two-week course in September organised by Ghent and Antwerp Universities, the NGO Group gave a presentation on the role of the NGO community in monitoring the implementation of the CRC. It was part of the component on 'Strategies and Methodologies for Implementation'. There were over 40 participants, including NGOs from Uzbekistan, Tanzania, Ghana, Democratic Republic of Congo, Lebanon, Malta, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom, some of whom had already contributed to the reporting process. In addition to strengthening participants' understanding, this was an opportunity to meet interested NGOs who were not yet involved in reporting on the CRC.

Reaching out to national NGOs in Geneva

The NGO Group participated in training courses provided in Geneva to national NGOs and UNICEF National Committees. As part of the International Service for Human Rights' (ISHR) training courses on treaty body monitoring, the NGO Group explained the role of civil society in monitoring the CRC and its Protocols. The course in September was for French-speaking NGOs from 15 countries, most of whom were from Francophone Africa. As a number of the NGOs worked on child or youth-related issues, they were interested to find out more about reporting on the CRC. The second course in November was for 18 NGO representatives from Asia, Latin America, Middle East and Africa. As these courses target a broad range of professionals working in human rights, they allowed the NGO Group to reach out to human rights NGOs who may be working on child rights issues. During UNICEF's National Committee Workshop on Education for Development, the NGO Group presented information on the CRC reporting process and child participation. This provid-

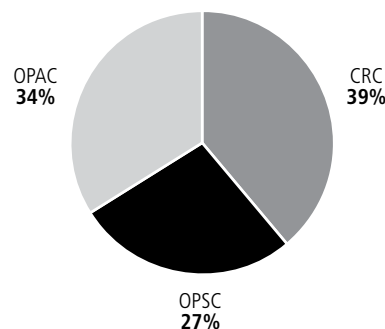
ed a good opportunity to explain how National Committees could support the reporting process in their respective countries.

1.2 Strengthening reporting by national NGOs

In 2008, the NGO Group continued its core activity of supporting NGOs in reporting to the Committee through the preparation of alternative reports and meeting the Committee during private pre-sessional meetings. One of the new trends was the increase in the number of children preparing reports and meeting the Committee to share their perspectives on the implementation of their rights. In 2008, the Committee examined 41 reports in its pre-sessions and/or sessions.

Despite starting the year with very little backlog,

Breakdown of reports examined by the Committee under each treaty in 2008



2008 saw an important increase in reports being submitted under the three treaties. By the end of 2008, there were 80 pending reports, thus extending the backlog to 2011. The NGO Group therefore supported the Committee's request to work in two chambers in 2009 and 2010 by writing to the UN Secretary General, the High Commissioner for Human Rights and other relevant decision-makers.

In 2008, the NGO Group identified and supported national NGOs and coalitions from 24 countries to submit alternative reports in relation to 32⁴ State party reports and/or have direct access to the Committee through participation in the pre-session. Support was tailored to the needs of each NGO – from supporting the submission of reports and organising their participation in the pre-session, to full accompaniment of drafting efforts, financing and arranging travel to, and accommodation in, Geneva. For each country being

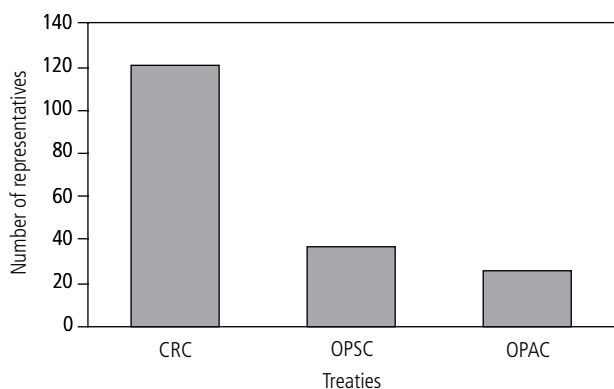
⁴ There can be more than one report per State party submitted at once, which is why there are more reports than countries being examined.

examined, the NGO Group provided NGOs with guidance to ensure that they presented the most relevant information to the Committee.

The NGO Group facilitated the participation of 116 NGO representatives in the pre-sessions and/or children's meetings and 77 representatives in the sessions.⁵ While the NGOs are only present as observers during the sessions, the NGO Group continued to facilitate their interaction with the Committee to strengthen the discussion with the State party. This included providing information on key priorities and advising how best to approach sensitive subjects. In addition to the NGO representatives, 48 children attended the pre-sessions, their own meetings with the Committee and/or sessions.

To assist NGOs in understanding the Optional Pro-

NGO Group assisted in attending the pre-sessions and sessions



ocols, the NGO Group prepared and disseminated its recent analysis of the themes covered by the Committee during the State party examination. This contributed to the increased quantity and quality of reports under both Optional Protocols since the Committee began examining these reports in 2005. This was especially noticeable for the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (OPAC), as alternative reports had rarely in the past been submitted for countries with no armed conflict. In 2008, the only country to have ratified the Optional Protocols, and not the CRC (the United States of America), was examined by the Committee.

Reporting on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

The pre-sessions, where NGOs are invited for a private dialogue with Committee members, constitutes one of the most intensive parts of the NGO Group's direct support to NGO reporting. To prepare the NGOs for their three-hour pre-session, the NGO Group briefed each

country delegation on the procedure of the meeting and how to maximise their impact. In 2008, the NGO Group provided technical assistance and logistical support to 26 NGOs or coalitions,⁶ from the Dominican Republic, Timor Leste, Bulgaria, Eritrea, Georgia, Serbia, Sierra Leone, Bhutan, the United Kingdom, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Malawi, Moldova, the Netherlands and Chad.⁷ It also covered travel and accommodation costs for 17 NGO representatives coming to Geneva.

The NGO Group monitored all the States parties' examinations to produce country reports of the discussions between the Committee and the States parties. Twenty-eight reports were produced and sent to NGOs from the concerned country as well as to the broader child rights community through CRINMails and the NGO Group website. In addition, a new session report on the developments of the work of the Committee was produced for the 48th and 49th sessions.

Reporting on the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (OPSC)

The Committee examined 11 State party reports under the OPSC. The NGO Group provided technical assistance and logistical support to 10 national coalitions/NGOs (including 6 children) on reporting to the Committee under the OPSC from: Austria, Chile, the Republic of Korea, the Netherlands, Tanzania, Timor Leste, Uganda, and the United States of America. Financial support was provided to the following 10 civil society representatives to participate in the pre-sessions and sessions on the OPSC: Chile, Timor Leste, the Republic of Korea, Tanzania and Uganda.

When identifying NGOs or coalitions to prepare reports on the OPSC, the NGO Group strongly emphasised the need for information on the many forms of sale and the importance of covering the entire Optional Protocol. In 2008, certain national NGOs began working in small groups of organisations specialised in the issues covered by the OPSC to prepare more detailed alternative reports. As a result, the reports increasingly included information on the forms of sales other than for sexual purposes, namely organs, labour and adoption.

⁵ Each country has a separate pre-session and session as part of the examination of the State party report and implementation of the CRC.

⁶ There may be more than one coalition or national NGO preparing a report for each country.

⁷ The NGOs who reported on Eritrea, Bhutan and the DPRK were exiled groups, as there were no civil society organisations in a position to report at national level.

Reporting on the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (OPAC)

Having followed the Committee's examination of OPAC reports since 2005, the NGO Group was able to effectively guide NGOs in producing alternative reports regardless of whether or not there was a conflict as only two – Uganda and the Philippines- had children involved in armed conflict. One noticeable improvement was in the quality of the reports prepared by NGOs from countries not involved in armed conflict. Support was provided to NGOs from Chile, Germany, Ireland, the Philippines, the United States of America, Uganda, Tanzania and the United Kingdom. Financial support was provided to one representative from Chile, the Philippines, Uganda and Tanzania.

Child participation in the reporting process

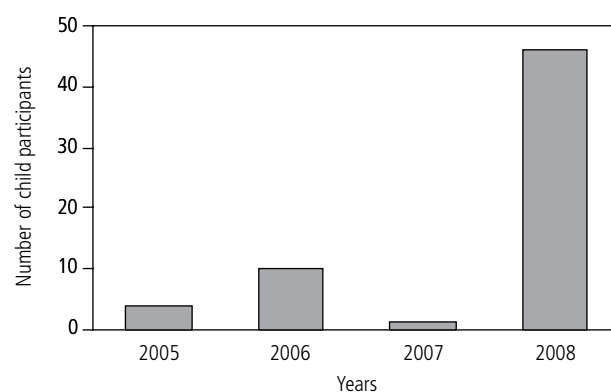
In recent years, children have been taking an increasingly active role in the reporting process, from contributing their views to NGO and State party reports, to submitting their own evidence to the Committee, to taking action on the Committee's concluding observations. As such, a better-defined and more permanent role for children in the reporting process needs to be put in place. 2008 saw the highest number of children ever participating in the reporting process. Children from Serbia, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom, Uganda and Moldova participated in the pre-sessions and/or sessions of the Committee. In most cases, they prepared their own reports and had private one-hour meetings with the Committee to highlight their priorities and share their views. Most of the children reported on the CRC, with the exception of the children from Uganda who spoke about the OPSC and the OPAC.

Given the growing interest and mobilisation of children in reporting on the implementation of their rights, the NGO Group began a project to develop



The children's delegation from Get Ready for Geneva (England)

Children participating in the pre-session and children's meetings with the Committee



There were fewer children in 2007, as many of the reports examined were on the two Optional Protocols.

child-friendly guidelines for reporting in collaboration with the Child Rights Alliance for England (CRAE). Through these guidelines, children will have information on how they can take part in the process at both the national and international level, how NGOs can help facilitate the process and how to formalise their participation in the meetings in Geneva. These guidelines will be finalised in 2009.

1.3 Enhancing NGO influence in the elections of Committee members

In accordance with Article 43 of the CRC, the elections of 9 Committee members were held on 16 December 2008 at the United Nations in New York. With six members not seeking re-election, this was the biggest turnover since the Committee expanded from 10 to 18 members in 2003.

Although NGOs cannot nominate candidates, they can play a role in lobbying their State party to nominate a candidate who meets some recommended criteria, such as demonstrated expertise in human rights (especially child rights), independent and impartial, ability to devote sufficient time to the work of the Committee and ensuring a variety of professional backgrounds. Although the nomination process within each country may differ, the NGO Group sent its fact-sheet with information on the role of NGOs in the election process to all the organisations or coalitions that have taken part in the reporting process.

As for previous elections, the NGO Group encouraged national NGOs to lobby their governments to nominate qualified candidates. As soon as candidates were officially nominated, the NGO Group asked the NGOs from the given countries to provide information

about the candidates' suitability based on the key criteria. NGOs from 16 countries provided feedback on the candidates. This information was analysed and used to encourage UN Missions to elect candidates with the most suitable profile for the work of the Committee and redress the regional imbalance. The latter improved as a result of the elections, as Latin America gained two new members.

Advocating for Committee members from Latin American

With only one Committee member, Latin American NGOs decided to develop a strategy to promote strong nominations from the region. The NGO Group together with Save the Children Sweden (Latin American Regional Office) and Save the Children Peru worked closely with national and regional NGOs to advise them on the nomination and election process. During the II Regional Forum of National Coalitions (Montevideo), national child rights coalitions from the region decided to focus on three areas. First, they raised awareness about the regional imbalance among governments and decision-makers and encouraged them to support at least two candidates from Latin America. Secondly, the Peruvian National Coalition, other NGOs based in Peru and REDLAMYC carried out a campaign to get Susana Villarán de la Puente nominated and elected to the Committee. They advocated for Ms. Villarán de la Puente's nomination at national level and provided information on lobbying for her election in New York. The third area of collaboration was to disseminate information about the candidates from the region, including Susana Villarán de la Puente and Marta Maurás Pérez (Chile), to highlight their expertise in child rights and to mobilise support for their nominations. The NGO Group provided advice throughout the process. The region also put forwards strong candidates from Colombia, Ecuador and Haiti, all of whom had support from NGOs. The campaign was successful in ensuring that two representatives from Latin America were elected to the Committee.

1.4 Facilitating NGO participation in the day of general discussion

To strengthen NGO participation in days of general discussion, the NGO Group prepared a fact-sheet on the potential role of NGOs in proposing themes and participating in the days themselves. The day of general discussion on '*The right of the child to education in emergency situations*'⁸ was held on the 19th of September 2008. As the discussion day was spearheaded by two NGO Group members – Save the Children and World Vision International – the NGO Group Secretariat focused on circulating the outline along with information on NGO participation in the process and answered requests for information from the child rights community through CRIN. Fourteen NGOs and independent experts sent written submissions and many NGO representatives participated in the day of discussion and contributed to its recommendations. In addition, following consultations with the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE), the NGO Group proposed a NGO representative for the second working group on the content and quality of education provided for children in emergency situations.⁸

1.5 Consolidating NGO inputs for two new General Comments

In 2008, the Committee on the Rights of the Child worked on General Comments 11 and 12 on the Rights of Indigenous Children and Youth and on the Right of the Child to Express Views and be Heard. Through its Working Group on Indigenous Children and the Secretariat, the NGO Group circulated the latest drafts to specialised NGOs for feedback. The NGO Group followed their development closely to ensure that NGOs with relevant expertise were involved in the drafting process, as General Comments promote the implementation of the CRC and assist States parties in fulfilling their reporting obligations. Both General Comments are expected to be adopted in 2009.

General Comment 11: the rights of Indigenous children and youth

As part of the ongoing process of developing the General Comment, the NGO Group's Working Group on Indigenous Children conducted the largest consultation on any General Comment to date and provided

⁸ Investments for the Implementation of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of Children and International Cooperation – CRC article 4.

⁹ Unfortunately, the NGO representative (Jackie Kirk) was killed during a mission in Afghanistan. The NGO Group organised a minute's silence in memory of Jackie Kirk during the event.

ongoing feedback to the Committee, including on the final draft which was circulated in October. Consultations took place over two years in four UN languages. The NGOs involved in the process expect the General Comment to provide States parties and relevant NGOs and UN Bodies with guidance on the interpretation of the CRC with respect to Indigenous children.

General Comment 12: the right of the child to express views and be heard

Members of the NGO Group assisted the Committee in developing this general comment through the creation of an inter-agency working group. The NGO Group Secretariat also circulated the latest draft to other NGOs with relevant expertise to ensure a broad consultation.



Cindy Blackstock (convenor of the Working Group), Jaap Doek, Margo Greenwood and Christine Evans after having presented the 1st draft of GC 11



2. Enabling effective NGO engagement with the broader UN human rights system

In 2008, the NGO Group increased its activities in mainstreaming child rights in the broader human rights system through the Human Rights Council (HRC) and its Universal Periodic Review (UPR) as well as by engaging with other treaty bodies.

Harmonising treaty body working methods

Building on a meeting in 2007 in which international human rights NGOs¹⁰ formulated joint recommendations to effectively and consistently engage NGO participation in all treaty bodies, the NGOs presented a joint statement to the Inter-Committee Meeting in June 2008. Prior to the meeting, the NGO Group met with the Committee on the Rights of the Child to obtain their support for the joint recommendations. The main issues of the joint NGO statement were: the consideration of state reporting (having a master calendar for treaty body consideration, confidentiality of NGO submissions, formal oral briefings for NGOs, procedure to ensure effective follow-up of concluding observations), the development of general comments (adopting a common and transparent procedure for consulting and drafting general comments) and the need to strengthen the procedure for electing treaty body members. During the meeting, the Committee on the Rights of the Child noted that the NGO Group was a good model for NGO participation in the work of a treaty body. A second Inter-Committee meeting in December 2008 allowed NGOs to follow-up on issues discussed during the June session.

Encouraging child rights NGOs to report to other treaty bodies

To promote and facilitate submissions from child rights NGOs to other UN treaty bodies, the NGO Group compiled information on the working methods of each treaty body. The content of the CCPR, CAT, CERD, CEDAW and CESC were reviewed and the articles relevant to child rights were identified. The NGO Group began informing child rights NGOs about the dates of examination of their State party reports and the working methods of other treaty bodies and provid-

ed advice on how to submit reports. As a result, child rights NGOs had a better understanding of other treaty bodies and their relevance to child rights. While some NGOs had reported to the HRC and CAT, many had no information about the working methods and reporting processes of the other treaty bodies. While it is not the NGO Group's mandate to provide the same services to NGOs to report to all treaty bodies, it encourages them to provide relevant information on children's issues under other treaties.

The NGO Group also provided expert guidance to NGOs working with other treaty bodies. It contributed to the formulation of a new NGO – the Centre for Civil and Political Rights (CCPR Centre). This NGO will seek to build on good practices developed by the NGO Group for NGO involvement in the work of the Human Rights Committee. The NGO Group also followed up previous contacts with NGOs seeking to support the new Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The latter was looking to build on good practices, including the NGO Group's model of NGO reporting and pre-sessional meetings, to support the new Committee which will begin its activities in February 2009.

Making child rights visible at the Human Rights Council

The NGO Group's Working Group on the HRC, in collaboration with the NGO Group Secretariat, continued integrating child rights into the work of the Human Rights Council (HRC) by lobbying key stakeholders; preparing joint oral and written statements and parallel events; and producing new tools. It also provided information on child rights for the Universal Periodic Review process.

In preparation for the March session, the Working Group began lobbying relevant permanent missions¹¹

¹⁰ The NGOs included APT, ISHR, the NGO Group, AI, OMCT and HRW.

¹¹ The main actors targeted were the co-sponsors of the child rights resolution, namely Slovenia, which held the EU presidency, and Uruguay, which led GRULAC on child rights issues.

in January. Thanks to continuous lobbying, including a joint written statement¹² signed by 12 NGO members of the Working Group and a side event¹³ organised with the permanent missions of Slovenia and Uruguay, the 2008 HRC resolution on the rights of the child included a specific section on the need to integrate the rights of the child in the work and procedures of the HRC. The latter decided to devote at least one full day a year to discuss different themes on the rights of the child and will consider an omnibus resolution every four years. The Working Group began an assessment of its work thus far related to the UPR which will be completed in 2009.

Engaging national NGOs in the Universal Periodic Review

A new area of work was to facilitate the participation of national child rights NGOs in the UPR process. The NGO Group carried out a pilot project with a limited number of countries. Information about the 3rd and 4th UPR sessions and the working modalities of the process were sent to NGOs from countries under review. As a result, NGOs from Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Colombia, Germany, Russia, Azerbaijan, Mexico and China sent written submissions. In preparation for the interactive dialogue, the NGO Group met with government missions prior to the UPR sessions to highlight the key child rights issues in each country. Certain recommendations and issues communicated to the missions were taken up during the interactive dialogue (e.g. Uzbekistan and Turkmenistan) and/or included in the outcome document of the UPR Working Group. The UPR process was also presented to European and Latin American NGOs during workshops in Romania and Uruguay.

¹² The joint statement was entitled "Building a Human Rights Council that Gives Priority to the Rights of Children."

¹³ The side event was "Child Rights Mainstreaming at the Human Rights Council".



3. World Congress III against the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents



Participants of the Expert Consultation on Legal Frameworks in Berne

As one of the co-organisers of the Congress, the NGO Group focused on linking the Congress to the work of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, international and national NGOs as well as the OPSC. It proposed that members of the Committee and the Special Rapporteur on the Sale of Children participate in the Expert Advisor Group, regional and thematic consultations and the Congress. In addition, the NGO Group worked to ensure the submission of comprehensive information from NGOs and their participation in the Congress. The NGO Group coordinated its input into the Congress through its Secretariat and a support team (see box) focusing on informing its members and the national coalitions from countries that had ratified the OPSC about their potential role in the regional and thematic meetings and the Congress itself.

The organisers of the Congress, namely the Brazilian government (the host), ECPAT International, UNICEF and the NGO Group chose themes to assess the progress made since Yokohama. The five themes were:

- New Dimensions of Sexual Exploitation of Children
- Legal Frameworks and Enforcement
- Integrated Inter-Sectoral Policies
- Role of the Private Sector and Corporate Social Responsibility
- Strategies for International Cooperation.

Building on the two previous Congresses, the III Congress focused on the adoption and implementation of new international instruments as well as the chal-

Coordinating civil society input to the Congress

In February, the Working Group against the Sexual Exploitation of Children established a support team for members who wanted to actively take part in the Congress.^a The support team worked closely with the NGO Group's Coordinator of the Congress to support NGOs in planning, participating and following-up the Congress and proposed names of speakers, panellists, moderators, and rapporteurs. Members of the support team or local partners also attended thematic and regional consultations. The support team also provided technical assistance and shared information on a systematic basis from the Central Organising Committee; provided input into the communications strategy and facilitated the participation of children and youth. In order to mobilise members of the NGO Group, the support team organised an information session on the Congress during the NGO Group's General Assembly in May and promoted the Congress at other previously scheduled events. Many of its members were also panellists in the workshops and shared the NGO Group's information stand at the Congress.

^a The support team was composed of Ecpat, SOS-Kinderdorf, BICE, Intervida, IFSW, TDH, WWSF, Save the Children, WVI and Plan International.



Representatives of the NGO Group and the Tanzanian and Ukrainian coalitions at the Congress



Stella Ayo Odongo sharing the Ugandan NGO perspective at the Congress in the presence of Rosa Maria Ortiz

lenges posed by new scenarios of sexual exploitation (including internet pornography, grooming, etc). The importance of traditional actors (the state through inter-sectoral policies) as well as new actors such as the private sector was also reflected in the choice of themes. As the NGO Group Secretariat focuses on the monitoring and implementation of international instruments, it contributed mostly to theme 2 on legal frameworks. However, the NGO Group facilitated the participation of its members and national coalitions in the other themes according to their areas of expertise.

Between 25 and 28 November, 3145 participants, including 300 children and 160 government delegations and leading experts in the field attended the Congress in Rio de Janeiro. As co-organiser, the NGO Group was allocated 250 seats at the Congress and coordinated invitations for its 80 members, as well as a representative from each of the national NGOs from states that had ratified the OPSC. It offered financial support to national NGOs from the South or countries in transition that had submitted alternative reports under the OPSC. The sponsored child rights coalitions were from Bangladesh, Costa Rica, Guatemala, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda and Ukraine. The NGO Group ensured that its members and national NGOs played an active role

as experts in 18 workshops as well as being moderators and rapporteurs in 10 workshops. The NGO Group also organised an exhibition stand and participated in the launch of a youth web-portal (www.StopX.org) – an online community of young activists fighting sexual exploitation of children and adolescents.

In preparation for the Congress, the NGO Group co-organised the African regional meeting in Senegal. As a good example from the region, the NGO Group invited the Ugandan Child Rights NGO Network to share its experience in monitoring and reporting on the OPSC. The same representative discussed the OPSC reporting process at a workshop during the Congress. The NGO Group also provided support for the paper prepared by the Special Rapporteur on the Sale of Children on progress made since Yokohama and the challenges remaining in Africa. The NGO Group ensured that NGO experiences in reporting on the OPSC were provided during regional consultations, thematic meetings and the Congress itself through workshops such as “Promotion and use of the recommendations of the CRC Committee” and “Ratification, implementation and updates in the Protocols to the CRC and other international instruments”. The NGO Group also drafted the sections on the OPSC for the thematic paper on Legal Frameworks, one of the background documents for the Congress.



The NGO Group, UNICEF, Brazilian Government, child and ECPAT representatives drawing conclusions from the Congress



4. Campaigns and activities of other Thematic Working Groups

As platforms for discussion and debate as well as for joint action to advance child rights within the UN system, the Working Groups participated in the drafting of general comments, co-organised a World Congress, and worked to integrate child rights into the work of the HRC. Other Working Groups sought to establish a new Optional Protocol to the CRC, raised awareness of Guidelines for Children without Parental Care and lobbied for the appointment of a Special Representative on Violence.

Working Group for a Communications Procedure for the CRC

Having worked as an informal coalition since 2006, members of the NGO Group set up a new working group to raise awareness and mobilise support for a communications procedure. The Working Group met with the Committee on the Rights of the Child to present the campaign and seek the Committee's support for an Optional Protocol for a communications procedure. The Committee adopted a position in support of the procedure at the Working Group's side event in June.

During the March session of the HRC, the Working Group hosted a side event and submitted a written statement emphasising the national and regional support of NGOs for the campaign. It also launched an international petition in support of the Optional Protocol. To date, more than 480 NGOs, human rights institutions and other bodies have signed the petition. In addition, the Working Group wrote to the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and met with the UN Deputy Commissioner for Human Rights to discuss the campaign. The Working Group also organised a side event at the June session of the HRC as well as meetings with 'friendly states' in May and October 2008 to mobilise interest and support.

In support of the campaign, the Working Group developed a brochure outlining the need for the procedure and the arguments for/against such an Optional Protocol. It also produced a briefing paper on the use of existing complaints procedures to challenge violations of children's rights as well as lobbying materials

for individuals and organisations to use to lobby their respective governments.

Working Group on Children without Parental Care

In June, a high-level delegation meeting was organised during the HRC to raise awareness of the Draft UN Guidelines on the Appropriate Use and Conditions of Alternative Care for Children amongst the Missions in Geneva. This meeting organised by the Brazilian Mission, the NGO Working Group for Children without Parental Care and UNICEF, which included the participation of a member of Committee Rights of the Child, aimed at promoting the adoption of the text and its implementation. The meeting provided an opportunity for states to gain an insight into the Guidelines, their history and the process to date as well as to raise questions and make comments. It was also an occasion for the Committee, UNICEF, NGO and state representatives to reiterate their support for the guidelines. It was the first time that the text and process was publicly visible in an international arena which helped gather momentum and support for the Draft Guidelines. A series of open consultations with states to be held in February/March 2009 will fine-tune the text of the Guidelines and the Working Group spent the latter part of 2008 preparing for these consultations.

Working Group on Violence against Children

Having lobbied for the mandate of Special Representative on Violence in 2007, the Working Group focused its 2008 activities lobbying the office of the UN Secretary-General to appoint a Special Representative on Violence against Children as requested by the General Assembly resolution. A joint letter was sent to the Secretary-General in February highlighting the importance of appointing someone with exceptional experience and skills and listing 10 fundamental criteria for the candidate. The letter was also sent to all the NGOs that had signed the petition in support of the establishment of the Special Representative on Violence and many took the initiative of forwarding it to the Secretary-General's

Office. The Chief of Cabinet of the Secretary-General responded to the letter in early March, appreciating the active role of NGOs and taking note of the recommendations. Due to the continued delays in the appointment of the Special Representative, the Working Group proposed text to be included in the HRC resolution on the rights of the child calling for the establishment of the mandate without delay. The proposed text was repeated nearly verbatim in HRC resolution 7/29 adopted during the March session. Unfortunately, the appointment was not made in 2008 despite the many efforts of the Working Group and other partners.



5. Tools and publications

To increase its visibility and respond to the needs and requests from national NGOs and members of the network, the NGO Group developed a website, a logo and a flyer explaining the services provided by the NGO Group. It also produced practical tools to strengthen the involvement of NGOs in the work of the Committee and the broader human rights system. All tools and publications can be downloaded from the NGO Group website.

The NGO Group launched a new website

To provide information on the reporting process, the creation of national coalitions, the working methods of the Committee, the issues covered by the Working Groups, as well as events such as the World Congress III, the NGO Group developed a new website (www.childrightsnet.org). It replaced the pages it had on CRIN, to make information on its work more easily accessible. However, the NGO Group and CRIN continue to share the alternative reports and national coalitions database.



Fact-sheets on the Committee's working methods

In addition to up-dating the fact-sheet on the elections of the Committee, two new fact-sheets were produced. They focused on influencing the working methods of the Committee by taking part in the drafting of Gen-

eral Comments and in the Days of General Discussion. They provide information for NGOs to understand how they can influence the choice of topics, the drafting of texts and the follow-up of these two working methods. The fact-sheets were prepared in English, French and Spanish and were distributed during training workshops. The fact-sheet on the elections was used to inform NGOs about the role they could play prior to the 2008 elections.



Guide to reporting in Russian

Given the focus on Central and Eastern Europe in 2008, the NGO Group translated its *Guide for Non-Governmental Organizations Reporting to the Committee on the Rights of the Child* into Russian. This guide was used during the training workshop in the Ukraine and sent to other NGOs from the region. The guide now exists in English, French, Spanish, Arabic and Russian.

UPR toolkit

To explain how child rights NGOs can participate in the UPR process, the Working Group on the HRC developed a UPR toolkit. It is specifically targeted towards national and international child rights NGOs and includes information on the UN human rights system and its bodies, the Universal Periodic Review and the role of NGOs in this process. The UPR toolkit was launched during a side event held during the 8th session of the HRC, which was attended by NGO, OHCHR and government representatives.



6. Strengthening the NGO Group as an organisation

Strengthening the NGO Group's governance

Following the adoption of the revised statutes during the extraordinary General Assembly (November 2007), the NGO Group held the first elections for its Executive Committee. The members of the network were invited to nominate candidates from member organisations, based on a list of competencies for members of the Executive Committee. Seven members were elected during the General Assembly (21 May 2008) and an eighth member was co-opted by the Executive Committee during its first meeting for her expertise and national level perspective.

To strengthen the link between the national and international levels and to include their expertise on implementing child rights, national coalitions and NGOs were encouraged to apply for membership during training workshops, the World Congress III and while attending the sessions of the Committee.

The review of the Working Groups, which began during the extraordinary General Assembly, continued in 2008 and led to the Working Groups on Armed Conflict and Displacement and on National Coalitions being shut down. The former was inactive, while the latter was no longer needed, as the work it was conducting was to a large extent being carried out by the NGO Group Secretariat. A new Working Group for a Communications Procedure for the CRC was created and approved by the General Assembly. This process of creating or closing down Working Groups will continue when necessary to respond to the needs of the members of the NGO Group and the emergence of new child rights issues.

Developing the Secretariat

The NGO Group restructured its Secretariat to strengthen its core activities and develop new areas of work. In the first half of the year, the Coordinator became full-time and new Child Rights and Administrative Officers were hired. Furthermore, a geographic approach was adopted for the work with national coalitions, the reporting process and the follow-up to the concluding observations of the Committee, to ensure continuity with national partners. In addition, a component on mainstreaming child rights was added to the work of the Secretariat to ensure that relevant child rights issues were covered by other treaty bodies and the UPR process.

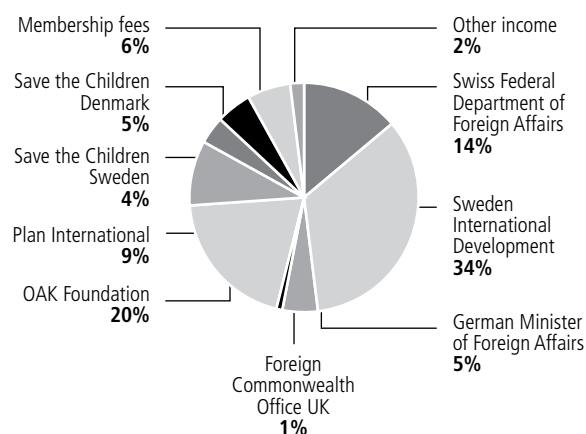
Looking ahead

2009 will be a special year for the NGO Group, child rights organisations and children, as it will mark the 20th anniversary of the CRC. The NGO Group will therefore take part in events to commemorate the anniversary and continue evaluating future opportunities to strengthen child rights at national level. In addition, the Secretariat will be looking to increase its team to deal with the extra countries being examined under the two chambers system of the Committee which will begin in October 2009. Other areas of expansion include child participation in reporting, mainstreaming child rights in the broader UN human rights system and the Optional Protocol on a Communications Mechanism for the CRC. To take into account all these developments, the NGO Group will be developing a new Strategic Plan for 2010-2012 to provide the strategic direction for the activities of the network and its secretariat.

7. Accounts

In 2008, the NGO Group strengthened its fundraising and secured sufficient funds to strengthen its team. Its main donors included the government of Switzerland, Sweden (Sida), Germany, the Oak Foundation, Save the Children Sweden and Denmark, as well as Plan International. Further funds were provided by the members of the NGO Group through their annual fees, as well as by the United Kingdom FCO for a small project.

2008 Sources of Funding



2008 Expenditures of the NGO Group

	SWISS MFA	SIDA	GERMAN MFA	FCO UK	OAK FDT	PLAN INT	SCS	SCD	MEMBERS	OTHER INCOME	TOTAL	
Activities											394,793	88%
NGO participation in CRC & OP reporting	9,798	10,542	25,388		5,022						50,750	
Training national NGOs	2,081	2,081									4,162	
World Congress III against sexual exploitation		45,886			48,739						94,625	
Personnel & social charges	35,000	47,592		471	16,905	56,000	24,459	31,110	8,633		220,170	
Website	4,000	1,000	6,162								11,162	
Russian guide, annual report & promotional materials	1,405			688	3,226						5,319	
Fact sheets	1,961	1,961		4,683							8,605	
Core costs											55,164	12%
Rent & utilities	12,181	12,181			65						24,427	
Account services & programme	4,296	2,148							2,148		8,592	
Auditor	3,450										3,450	
Fundraising services	3,000	3,000									6,000	
ExCo, General Assembly & working group meetings									6,435		6,435	
Computer equipment & maintenance	2,829	3,431									6,260	
Total expenditure per donor in 2008	80,000	129,822	31,550	5,842	73,957	56,000	24,459	31,110	17,216	0	449,957	
Income earmarked for 2009		70,830			41,424				16,093	12,698	141,045	
Total grant	80,000	200,652	31,550	5,842	115,381	56,000	24,459	31,110	33,309	12,698	591,001	



8. Staff and Executive Committee

In 2008 the staff and Executive Committee consisted of:

Secretariat staff

Lisa Myers – Coordinator
Shushan Khachyan – Child Rights Officer
Muriel Dreifuss Bisson – Administrative Officer

Short term staff and consultants

Margaret Brett
Karen Walker
Laura Theytaz Bergman
Laurence Cuny

Fundraising and accounting consultants

Michael Anthony
Sabine Cazenave

Interns

Angélique Duruz
Alissa Petee
Samantha Romolini
Sanaz Sheikholeslamzadeh
Sarah Wald

Executive Committee

Mr Lennart Reinius – President
Plan International Sweden

Mr Peter Newell – Vice-president
APPROACH Ltd

Mr Alan Kikuchi-White – Treasurer
SOS-Kinderdorf

Ms Agneta Ucko – Secretary
Arigatou Foundation

Ms Britta Oström
Save the Children

Ms Cécile Trochu Grasso
Organisation Mondiale Contre la Torture

Ms Ivanka Shalapatova
International Foster Care Organisation

Ms Veronica Yates
Child Rights Information Network

Working Groups of the NGO Group

Children without Parental Care
Communications Procedure
Human Rights Council
Indigenous Children
Juvenile Justice
Sexual Exploitation of Children
Violence against Children



9. Membership of the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child

1. 3D Three→Trade, Human Rights, Equitable Economy
2. Action for Children and Youth Aotearoa
3. African Child Policy Forum (ACPF)
4. Anti-Slavery International
5. APPROACH- Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children
6. Arigatou Foundation
7. Associated Country Women of the World (ACWW)
8. Association of Networks for Community Empowerment (ANCE)
9. Association Gruppo Abele
10. Baha'i International Community
11. Center for Organisation Research and Education (CORE)
12. Child Helpline International
13. Children's Rights Alliance – Ireland
14. Children's Rights Alliance for England (CRAE)
15. Child Rights Information Network (CRIN)
16. Christian Children's Fund Inc (CCFUSA)
17. Coalition Against Trafficking in Women International (CATW)
18. Consortium for Street Children
19. Defence for Children International (DCI)
20. ECPAT International
21. Education International
22. European Association for Children in Hospital (EACH)
23. EveryChild
24. First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada Incorporated (FNCFS)
25. Friends World Committee for Consultation (FWCC /QUNO)
26. Fundación Privada Intervida
27. Human Rights Watch (HRW)
28. Inter African Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women (IAC-HTPS)
29. International Alliance of Women (IAW)
30. International Association of Youth and Family Judges and Magistrates (IAYFJM)
31. International Baby Food Action Network (IBFAN/GIFA)
32. International Catholic Child Bureau (BICE)
33. International Council of Jewish Women (ICJW)
34. International Council of Women (ICW)
35. International Federation of Business and Professional Women (BPW)
36. International Federation of Educative Communities (FICE)
37. International Federation of Social Workers (IFSW)
38. International Federation of Women in Legal Careers (IFWLC)
39. International Foster Care Organisation (IFCO)
40. International Inner Wheel
41. International Movement "ATD Fourth World"
42. International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism (IMADR)
43. International Play Association (IPA)
44. International School Psychology Association (ISPA)
45. International Social Service (ISS)
46. Jesuit Refugee Service (JRS)
47. La Voix de l'Enfant
48. Lutheran World Federation (LWF)
49. Mani Tese
50. Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
51. Netzwerk Kinderrechte Schweiz
52. Penal Reform International (PRI)
53. Plan International
54. Plataforma de Organizaciones de Infancia
55. Resources Aimed at the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (RAPCAN)
56. ROC (The "Right of the Child" NGO)
57. Roshni Homes Trust
58. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Human Rights Association (SVGHRA)
59. Save the Children, Alliance
60. Soroptomist International
61. SOS-Kinderdorf International
62. Terre des Hommes International Federation (TdH)

63. WAO-Afrique
64. Werksatt Ökonomie
65. Women's World Summit Foundation (WWSF)
66. World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA)
67. World Alliance of YMCAs
68. World Association of Girl Guides and Girl Scouts (WAGGGS)
69. World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women
70. World Jewish Congress (WJC)
71. World Movement of Mothers (WMM)
72. World Organisation Against Torture/ SOS Torture (OMCT)
73. World Organisation for Early Childhood Education (OMEP)
74. World Union of Catholic Women's Organisations
75. World Vision International (WVI)
76. Young Men's Christian Association of Costa Rica
77. Zonta International



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Cover photo © 2005 Mrityunjay Awasthy, Courtesy of Photoshare
In India, a fourth grade Dawa (monk child) writes on a wooden slate about Bhagat Singh.

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