

UNGASS Follow-up in India:

The India Alliance for Child Rights (IACR) has been very active in following-up the UN Special Session on Children. They report the following:

Post-UNGASS feedback meeting, 11 June 2002: Delegates from 34 NGOs took part in the meeting, as well as the Government of India's secretary for women and child development and the UNICEF country representative. At the meeting, the government secretary pledged an ongoing interaction with NGOs, and asked the Alliance to join in identifying priorities for the national plan of action (NPA) and making proposals. It was also agreed to hold a wider national consultation to trigger a collective NGO planning process.

National Consultation, 16-18 July 2002: This 3-day consultation involved adults and children. It examined critical priorities for action, heard thematic statements on key issues, and drew up a "must be done" list for India's action. On the agenda: joint discussion between government and people's organizations, presentation of the children's proposals, and adoption of a collective NGO work calendar for preparing plan recommendations. A total of 140 persons took part in this consultation: 53 national NGO delegates, 24 representatives from community-based NGOs, 61 children from 9 states of India, and 2 UNICEF representatives. Day I was dedicated fully to the children's session; on Day II, the national consultation began (with the children's session running parallel, and with ongoing interaction and presentations from the children), ending with a session of interaction with the government secretary for women and child development.

Working Groups: On the final day of the national consultation, working groups were set up to begin the task of formulating country plan proposals. These proposals will be developed through open fora and inter-NGO consultation, and will be provided to government counterparts at each stage of formulation and to UNICEF. The process is expected to yield its first firm plan proposals by the end of August.

Child participation: The IACR has enlisted UNGASS child delegates as planning team members. The IACR has also launched a children's network initiative, beginning with the July consultation, which involved a large number of children. The children have chosen a child from among themselves to begin work as a network focal point.

Government Response: The secretary for women and child development, the senior-most official in charge of the UNGASS follow-up for the Indian government, has offered ongoing interaction with NGOs, and asked the IACR to join in identifying priorities and making proposals during the NPA development. The proposed government plan formulation process for the new NPA also mentions "reality checks" with civil society. However, the IACR is concerned that the government has not committed to any ongoing joint planning relationship, and that the government is "not enthusiastic" about children's involvement in serious planning. The IACR is also concerned that there is no official indication that the CRC will form the frame or foundation for the NPA. These areas will be priorities for NGO advocacy.

Other activities: The IACR is developing selective contacts with key members of parliament and with parliamentary committees to invite them into the planning process. The IACR is also planning a country conference on India's Children's Day (November 14) to release its plan proposals. A media interaction and release on CRC linkage is planned for 20 November.