NGO Group
for the Convention on
the Rights of the Child

2007 Annual Report
The NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child

The NGO Group is a network of 77 national and international NGOs committed to all children fully enjoying their rights as defined by the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Through the NGO Group, member organisations become a more powerful global voice for child rights.

Mission
To promote, implement and monitor the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

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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Thanks
To evaluate the beneficial effects of the CRC on the fate of the world’s children is a long and difficult task. The universal scope of the CRC as well as its exceptional ratification rate makes it an unprecedented and complicated challenge. The example of the United Nations Secretary General’s Study on Violence against Children has led the way in a specific area. The question remains how to assess the accomplishments of the CRC worldwide over the course of a generation. We can break it up into different pieces: health, education, nutrition, shelter, protection against many forms of exploitation and children’s enjoyment of human rights, including civil and political rights. However, the resulting images or figures would be an overlay of partial, though probably accurate, data; a far cry from the clear, clean and precise picture of the child’s new status that the legislators of the 80s wanted to create.

Instead, when we think of the CRC, our minds are immediately filled with the challenges that remain, such as the innumerable violations of rights worldwide, the scars and bumps that children bear in our various countries (no country is totally right and each merits its own share of criticism), the apparent ineffectiveness of the CRC to deal with individual problems, the slow pace of some States parties to move from rhetoric to action, the difficulties in implementing the recommendations - however unequivocal they may be - on the pretext of limited financial means, weak human resources or lack of professional training.

Can we rush to a pessimistic conclusion 18 years after the CRC was adopted? No.

First of all, 18 years is a short period in the history of humanity. All problems cannot be solved within such a limited timeframe. Most states have enthusiastically welcomed this binding treaty and the majority of them intend to implement it in good faith. Secondly, if we look more closely, the position of children in our society has changed considerably since the CRC: the traditionally paternalistic and protective view of children has progressively turned into a rights-based approach. The child is gradually being considered as a person and not just a small being bearing stigma, presenting risks and requesting protection. The world is beginning to see the child as a partner whose opinion matters and must be taken into account. They are not only our future, but also actors in the present.

More importantly, the CRC has a "programmatic" effect on states. The legislative power must set up regulatory frameworks in line with the 1989 text and its two Protocols. Governments manage the direct or indirect implementation of the CRC through budgets, coordination mechanisms and the justice system, which has a whole new field for its jurisprudence. In addition, institutions such as universities should integrate the rights of the child into their curricula.

What about civil society? We cannot disregard its decisive role in monitoring, evaluating and implementing the CRC nor ignore its contribution to the cause of child rights. The huge effort made by NGOs to induce states to adopt the CRC continued well beyond 1989 and was intensified throughout the 18 years to make its implementation effective. This is noticeable throughout the world, where civil society has either been the engine of the ‘Child Rights movement’ or has complemented government action, while always being the guardian of the activist spirit that inspired the pioneers of child rights.

Finally, we must also appreciate the fact that
many of the NGOs actively working for child rights have formally united under the NGO Group for the CRC to promote its implementation and monitoring activities, to support treaty bodies, including the Committee on the Rights of the Child, and to speak with one voice. This is noteworthy and it is part of the already measurable benefits that the CRC, its promulgation and its dissemination have brought over the past 18 years.

Many thanks to all those who fight for and believe in child rights as a vehicle for social progress, equality and respect for the dignity of individuals, however small they may be.

Jean Zermatten  
Vice-Chairman of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child  
Director of the International Institute of Children’s Rights
Introduction from the President

Over the years, the NGO Group has become the main link between national and international NGOs and the Committee on the Rights of the Child, mainly by supporting NGOs in the reporting process on the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The NGO Group has also provided a platform for its members to work together to influence international child rights mechanisms, processes and events, including the Human Rights Council (and the previous Commission), the two World Congresses on Sexual Exploitation, the 2002 UN Special Session on Children, the UN Study on Violence against Children, the elections of Committee members and so on.

Due to an unanticipated funding crisis in early 2007, we had to reduce our secretariat and its work to make ends meet. However, the assistance provided to national coalitions of NGOs in reporting to the Committee and strengthening the implementation of the concluding observations continued unabated. In addition, our working groups coordinated and promoted the engagement of members in mainstreaming child rights in the broader human rights system. Thanks to the concerted efforts of our members, Executive Committee and remaining staff, the NGO Group managed to secure immediate financial support and some long-term funding in the second half of the year, which will allow for the creation of a new secretariat team in 2008.

Despite our many achievements and the recognition from child rights NGOs and coalitions worldwide, the NGO Group has been in need of reform to strengthen its role as a global voice for child rights. The crisis provided the opportunity to take stock of our work and to improve our governance. The members revised the statutes to introduce an election process for the board members and encourage the membership of child and youth-led organisations. In addition, the work of the secretariat and the working groups was analysed to ensure that it responded to the growing needs. To increase our visibility, we also began working on a new website to improve communication with members and other important stakeholders as well as to raise the profile of the NGO Group.

The success of the NGO Group depends on how we manage to support the work of the national coalitions, the Committee on the Rights of the Child and our member organisations to even more effectively promote, monitor and implement the Convention on the Rights of the Child and to mainstream child rights in the broader human rights system. The letters of support, assistance in fundraising and emergency funds from national coalitions, members of the Committee and NGO Group members reiterated the important role of the NGO Group in supporting the work of these key child rights actors.

I would like to express my deepest gratitude to all the members, donors and other supporters who stuck by us during this difficult year and can assure you that as a network and child rights guardian we are on the right track again!

Lennart Reinius
President of the NGO Group for the CRC
In 2007, the Committee examined 46 reports in pre-session and/or session. One of the marked differences compared to previous years was the increase in the proportion of reports on the two Optional Protocols. The Committee examined 15 reports under the CRC, 12 under the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (OPSC) and 19 under the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (OPAC).

In 2007, the NGO Group identified national NGOs and coalitions from over 32 countries and provided support to enable them to submit alternative reports and/or have direct access to the Committee through participation in the pre-session. Support was tailored to the needs expressed by each NGO – from supporting the submission of reports and organising their participation in the pre-session, to full assistance in drafting work, financing, and arranging travel and accommodation in Geneva. For each country examined by the Committee, the NGO Group provided national NGOs with guidelines and feedback on draft reports to ensure that they provided the most useful information for the Committee. The NGO Group sent the final reports to the secretariat of the Committee to guarantee timely reception and subsequent invitation of NGO representatives selected at the national level.

While there is an increasing number of national child rights coalitions with good knowledge of the CRC monitoring process, this is still not the case for the recently adopted Optional Protocols. Since reporting on the Optional Protocols began in 2005, the NGO Group has been trying to mobilise national NGOs to prepare reports, preferably as part of thematic groups focusing on the specific topics covered by the Optional Protocols. To assist NGOs in understanding the Optional Protocols, the NGO Group analysed the themes covered by the Committee during its examination with the States parties and distributed the results to the reporting NGOs. This contributed to the increase in quantity and the enhanced quality of reports for both Optional Protocols. After the initial reports on the Optional Protocols, the States parties are expected to prepare joint reports in respect of the CRC and its protocols.

1.1. Strong focus on alternative reporting under Optional Protocols

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As usual, the pre-sessions, where NGOs are invited to have a private dialogue with Committee members, constituted one of the most intensive parts of the NGO Group’s direct support to the NGO reporting process. To prepare the NGOs for their three-hour pre-session, the NGO Group briefs each country delegation on the procedure of the meeting and on ways to maximise their impact during the meeting. In 2007, the NGO Group provided technical assistance and logistical support to 18 NGOs or coalitions from Chile, Honduras, Kenya, Mali, Suriname, Sierra Leone, Venezuela, Kazakhstan, the Maldives, Uruguay, the Dominican Republic, Georgia, Timor Leste and Bhutan in their reporting on the CRC. The NGO Group facilitated the participation of 43 NGO representatives in the pre-sessions with the Committee and 18 representatives in the sessions. It also covered travel and accommodation costs for eight NGO representatives coming to Geneva.

The NGO Group monitored all the Committee examinations in presence of the governments in order to produce country reports on the discussions for NGOs from the country concerned as well as for the broader child rights community. The NGO Group also facilitated the participation of national NGOs in the sessions and their interaction with the Committee, when possible. Information, such as the country reports, was used in special CRINmails on the three sessions.

Reporting on the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children

In order to support NGO reporting under the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (OPSC), guidelines were produced with funding from Sida and the Oak Foundation in 2006 (under the Focal Point Programme). These guidelines were essential, as many NGOs did not know about the reporting process, which started soon after ratification by the countries. At the time, there was little understanding and knowledge of the Protocol. However, in 2007 NGOs reports were submitted for most of the countries examined under the OPSC. Amongst NGOs working on issues related to this Protocol, a strong emphasis was placed on the issues concerning sexual exploitation, prostitution and pornography, while information on other forms of sale of children, such as for adoption and labour, was often lacking. Consequently, when identifying NGOs or coalitions that could prepare reports on the OPSC, the NGO Group strongly emphasised the need for information on the many forms of sale of children and the importance of covering the entire Optional Protocol. This led certain national NGOs to create smaller groups of organisations specialising in the various issues related to the OPSC to prepare more detailed alternative reports. Technical assistance and logistical support was provided to NGOs or national coalitions from Bangladesh, Bulgaria, Costa Rica, Chile, France, Guatemala, Kyrgyzstan, Spain, Sudan, Timor Leste and Ukraine for their reports under the OPSC. With three years’ experience of reporting on this Protocol, the NGO Group planned to update its guidelines for future reports.

Unlike the CRC or OPSC, the issues relating to OPAC occur under special circumstances. As a result, NGOs from countries that are not involved in armed conflict are less likely to report on this Optional Protocol due to lack of time, resources and possibly knowledge of issues relating to their countries. Having followed the Committee’s examination of OPAC reports for the first two years, the NGO Group was able to guide national NGOs more effectively to provide the information the Committee was looking for, regardless of whether or not they were engaged in armed conflict. The NGO Group’s guidance helped increase reports on the OPAC in the second half of 2007. Support was provided to NGOs from Chile, Germany, Guatemala, Ireland, Lithuania, Norway, Sweden and Timor Leste. Having observed the first two years of the Committee’s evolving practices for examining this Optional Protocol, the NGO Group is considering revising the guidelines for reporting in order to reflect these developments.

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1There may be more than one coalition or national NGO preparing a report for each country.
2Each country has a separate pre-session and session as part of the examination of the State party report and implementation of the CRC.
3The authors of the original guidelines will be approached for this project.
1.2. Supporting and collaborating with national child rights coalitions

As part of its strategy to ensure more effective monitoring of the CRC, the NGO Group continues to support the creation and strengthening of national coalitions of NGOs. The preparation of reports by these coalitions have resulted in the reports including more specialised and detailed knowledge and a variety of points of view, and providing a more comprehensive picture of the child rights situation. This lends greater legitimacy to the information submitted, as it reduces government criticism that the NGOs are politically motivated or linked to the opposition. It also allows the Committee to study one comprehensive and representative report and facilitates comparison with the State party report.

As coalitions do not yet exist in all the states, the NGO Group focused on assisting NGOs in forming new coalitions or strengthening their collaboration. The following describes two collaboration efforts between the NGO Group and national NGOs from Iraq and Sudan in 2007.

Supporting the new Iraqi Child Rights Network

As part of a series of workshops to support the creation of the Iraqi Child Rights Network, the NGO Group was invited to the final workshop to provide ideas on how the new network could link up to the international child rights system. The NGO Group focused on the network’s role in the interim period when the government was unlikely to prepare a report for the Committee. As there was a serious lack of information on the situation of children in Iraq, the NGO Group assisted in identifying key issues for the network such as collection of data and carrying out a child rights situation analysis. Such data and information would be useful for NGOs, UN agencies and other parties involved in working with children in the country. The NGO Group also facilitated links with the broader child rights community and donors as a follow-up to the meeting.
In response to a request from the Child Rights Institute, the NGO Group provided advice in the planning phase and took part in a workshop in Khartoum in July. As the State party was due to report in late 2007, a series of workshops (including this one) had been organised to enhance understanding of the reporting process and mobilise NGOs to work together to prepare an alternative report. Thirty-two representatives of Sudanese NGOs from all over the country were trained in the reporting process, the role of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the work of the NGO Group. The NGO Group also encouraged the inclusion of existing coalitions of NGOs to share their experience of working as a coalition, and of reporting and following up the Committee’s recommendations. Coalitions from Ethiopia and Yemen shared their experience. This workshop was a catalyst for the mobilisation of Sudanese NGOs to work from a rights-based perspective. The organisers felt that the workshop created momentum through providing a better understanding of the international system and concrete examples from neighbouring countries. It also provided a basis for future collaboration, possibly in the form of a national coalition.

A Sudanese NGO focusing on training NGOs on the CRC
1.3. Engaging NGOs in the selection of new Committee Members

In accordance with Article 43 of the CRC, elections of nine members of the Committee were held on 21 February 2007 at the United Nations in New York. In preparation for these elections, the NGO Group produced a fact-sheet in English, French and Spanish which provided information for national and international NGOs on the election process and the potential role of NGOs in the nomination process. The NGO Group encouraged national NGOs to lobby their governments to nominate suitable candidates based on criteria for the ideal profile of a member. Once nominations were submitted, NGOs were requested to provide information on the candidates’ suitability using the same criteria. NGOs in 17 countries provided feedback on the candidates. The NGO Group analysed the information and used it to lobby UN Missions to elect candidates with the most suitable profile. Following the elections, the NGO Group prepared an announcement of the election results which included an analysis of the regional and professional breakdown of the new Committee. In addition, a fact-sheet on the new Committee was prepared which provided a summary of the professional and educational background of the members. This information was circulated to national and international NGOs through email and CRIN.

To ensure that the new Committee members understood the role of NGOs and UNICEF in the work of the Committee, the NGO Group and UNICEF held a training session on the alternative reporting process; the consultative processes taking place at national level; the participation of children; the alternative reports, and participation in pre-sessions. As a result, in both the June and October pre-sessions, the new members used the alternative reports actively and engaged with the NGOs in both the formal meeting as well as during informal meetings organised by the NGO Group.

1.4. Ensuring NGO participation in the day of general discussion

Each year the Committee devotes a meeting to a general discussion on one specific article of the Convention, or related subject, in order to foster a deeper understanding of the content and implications of the Convention. On 21 September 2007, the Committee held a day of general discussion on the theme ‘Resources for the Rights of the Child – Responsibility of States’. The NGO Group circulated the outline for the day of general discussion together with general information on ways in which NGOs could participate in the process, and responded to requests for information from the child rights community through CRIN. Thirty-three NGOs and independent experts put forward written submissions and numerous NGO representatives participated in the day of discussion and contributed to its recommendations. To ensure a more effective use of the day of general discussion amongst NGOs, the NGO Group plans to produce a fact-sheet on the subject in early 2008.

5Investments for the Implementation of Economic, Social and Cultural Rights of Children and International Cooperation - CRC article 4
1.5. Consolidating NGO inputs to three new general comments

As the main purpose of the general comments is to promote the implementation of the CRC and assist State parties in fulfilling their reporting obligations, the NGO Group follows their development closely. The NGO Group ensures that NGOs with specialist knowledge of the topics of the general comments are involved in the drafting process, be it leading the process or commenting on existing drafts. This is either done through the NGO Group’s working groups that focus on specific topics, such as that on indigenous children, and/or through the secretariat. In 2007, the Committee worked on general comments 10, 11 and 12, which cover respectively juvenile justice, indigenous children, and the right of the child to express his/her views and be heard.

Juvenile Justice:

In January 2007, the Committee adopted its 10th general comment on Children’s Rights in Juvenile Justice. The NGO Group had circulated drafts for several years and the NGO Group’s working group on juvenile justice held a consultation to consolidate comments for the final version.

The right of the child to express his/her views and be heard:

Members of the NGO Group assisted the Committee in the development of this new general comment through the creation of an inter-agency working group. The NGO Group followed its development and circulated draft versions of the general comment to other NGOs with expertise in the field to ensure broad consultation. It is expected to be adopted by the Committee in 2008.

Indigenous children:

The NGO Group’s working group on indigenous children undertook numerous initiatives to assist in the drafting of the general comment on indigenous children. To make the draft version more accessible, the working group translated it into three UN languages (Spanish, French and English) and some related documents into Russian6. A website7 was created to better consult with indigenous communities. It linked these efforts with three events:

- An international consultation was held in Victoria (Canada). It was attended by indigenous peoples from Nepal, Ecuador, Brazil, New Zealand, United States and Canada, and a number of young aboriginal people from Canada and the Amazon as well as experts on the subject.
- A presentation was made at the Secretariat of Aboriginal and Islander Child Care conference in Adelaide (Australia). Indigenous communities and NGOs working with indigenous peoples’ rights in Australia attended the conference.

In addition, members of the working group organised internal consultations with indigenous children and informal meetings with the expert writer. As a result, a second draft version of the general comment was prepared for presentation to the Committee in January 2008.

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6This was possible thanks to funds donated by aboriginal groups in Canada and volunteers from the Toronto Multi-cultural Center.
7http://www.isg-ngogroup.org/
2. Ensuring a greater impact at the national level for the Committee’s concluding observations

In 2007 the NGO Group increased its focus on the follow-up of the Committee’s concluding observations (COs). As national coalitions have gained in strength, they are in a better position to monitor and follow-up the COs and the NGO Group was keen to develop its support in this field. The purpose was to ensure that reporting to the Committee was not an end in itself but rather part of an on-going process to implement the CRC and improve the situation of children. The NGO Group conducted a basic analysis of progress made in implementing these recommendations in preparation for a meeting with the Committee. It also participated in the sub-regional meeting which took place in Burkina Faso and in other workshops to strengthen the follow-up of these recommendations.

2.1. Contributing to the CRC Committee’s efforts to improve the content and follow-up of concluding observations

Having analysed progress made in certain countries, the NGO Group noted that NGOs and child rights coalitions were increasingly making use of the concluding observations in their programmes, advocacy and monitoring. This indicated that civil society organisations increasingly saw the reporting process as going much further than producing alternative reports and attending Committee sessions in Geneva. However, much remained to be done before NGOs and State parties could make full use of these concluding observations.

The NGO Group meets formally with the Committee once a year. During the meeting in October, the NGO Group proposed ways to address the issue of the concluding observations. For example, the NGO Group encouraged the Committee to recommend regular collaboration between each government and key stakeholders, including NGOs and children, and that the State party should report back on such efforts at the following session. Moreover, the NGO Group recommended that the concluding observations be more specific to better ensure their enforceability. The NGO Group furthermore conveyed that it attached great value to the sub-regional follow-up workshops on the implementation of the concluding observations of the Committee such as those held in Latin America and West Africa. The NGO Group also emphasised the significance of the CRC as a legal instrument that confers legal obligations, as this gives more weight to the COs and provides better leverage to hold governments accountable.

2.2. Participating in regional follow-up meetings

Following up the CRC in Austria, Germany and Switzerland

The NGO Group took part in a workshop to follow up the CRC with NGOs, national UNICEF societies, academia and members of local and national governments in Austria, Germany and Switzerland. At the workshop the NGO Group presented the key issues in reporting to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the impact of NGO information on the concluding observations, and ensuring implementation of the follow-up. As the workshop brought together all the key parties involved in implementing the CRC, the participants were able to hold open discussions on national monitoring, youth participation and action plans.
Following the sub-regional meetings which have taken place over the past few years in different parts of the world, OHCHR, Plan International, the government of Burkina Faso, the Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie and UNICEF organised a workshop to follow-up the concluding observations in West Africa. It was the first of its kind on the African continent. As for the previous two meetings, the NGO Group and its partners in the region (such as Save the Children) provided a list of NGO coalitions which had previously prepared reports for the Committee and facilitated the presentation of the NGO speaker. Committee members, national NGOs and coalitions, governments, human rights institutions, UN bodies (UNHCR, UNICEF, WHO) and regional bodies attended the workshop. As it was the first time that children participated in the meeting, the NGO Group took part in the final phase of their preparations for their interventions during the workshop. In addition, the NGO Group and Save the Children organised a meeting with the NGO coalitions of the region, the President of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child and a CRC member to discuss how the NGO Group could further assist them in their alternative reports to the CRC and their participation in the sessions as well as possible training needs.

2.3. Monitoring and encouraging follow-up by National Coalitions

Reinforcing the impact of concluding observations was also done through the NGO Group’s Working Group on National Coalitions. While these coalitions have a tendency to be formed for the purpose of preparing alternative reports, the NGO Group tries to galvanise them into continuing their collaboration between reporting periods, notably through active use of the concluding observations. The Working Group collected information describing ways in which national coalitions publicise the concluding observations in their country and monitor the implementation of these recommendations.

In addition, the NGO Group held its regular ‘National Coalition Forums’ during the three CRC pre-sessions for national coalitions visiting Geneva and NGO Group members. These meetings provide the national coalitions with a platform to exchange information and understand how other networks resolve similar challenges; to obtain information on the broader human rights system; and to receive support for following-up the reporting process and the implementation of the Committee’s recommendations. In 2007 the following coalitions presented their work during the forums in February, June and October: Bangladesh, Guatemala, Kazakhstan, Uruguay, Sierra Leone, Venezuela, Chile, Dominican Republic, Georgia and Timor Leste.
3. Ensuring effective NGO engagement in the broader human rights system

3.1. Capitalising on CRC experience in treaty body reform

In 2007, a number of NGOs that have an interest in treaty body reform, including the NGO Group, had the opportunity to formulate joint recommendations that would allow effective and consistent NGO participation in all treaty body processes. These NGOs analysed how NGOs participated in the different treaty bodies, as well as best practices in terms of reporting, meetings with Committees, following up concluding observations, individual communications, inquiry procedures, general comments, days of general discussion and elections of members. This meeting provided a good insight into the workings and best practices of different treaty bodies. Draft recommendations on best practices were circulated to NGOs for comments at the end of 2007. The final report will be presented to the Inter-Committee Meeting in 2008.

During this process, it became evident that the CRC had some of the most effective NGO participation in the reporting process and the work of the Committee. This was largely related to the fact that a network of NGOs – the NGO Group - coordinated the input of NGOs into the reporting process and the implementation of the CRC. The impact was visible in the mobilisation of national NGOs (often through NGO Group members) to prepare alternative reports, the production of guidelines for reporting, the quality of the reports and the participation of NGOs in the pre-sessions.

3.2. Making children’s rights visible at the Human Rights Council

In 2007, the NGO Group continued various actions with the primary goal of integrating the rights of the child into the work of the Human Rights Council (HRC) through lobbying key stakeholders and organising various activities: joint oral and written statements, parallel events, informal brainstorming, and so on.

During the main session of the HRC in March, the NGO Group (through its HRC Working Group) decided to revive the ‘Child Rights Caucus’ briefings. It organised five meetings with representatives of some of the Special Procedures. Even though attendance was sometimes small, the quality of the debates was high, and the exchange of information between NGOs and Special Procedures was useful and appreciated. In March, a special event was dedicated to Violence against Children.

The Working Group also had regular contacts with countries that belong to the two regional groups historically sponsoring child rights resolutions: Uruguay (as leader of GRULAC on child rights issues) and Mexico, as well as European Union members such as Germany and Portugal (which held the EU Presidency in 2007), Sweden, Lithuania, France and Slovenia. Other delegations were also approached by several Working Group members: Turkey, Russia, Brazil, Switzerland, Cuba, Saudi Arabia and Algeria.

When the institution building process ended in June, the rights of the child were not listed as a specific item on the agenda and annual work programme of the HRC as was the case at the time of

9The CRC is the only treaty body that allocates a three-hour meeting per country for NGOs, UN agencies and other non-state actors to discuss the situation in the country.

10Joint oral statement on the agenda and working methods of the Council [January 2007, initiative by Save the Children Alliance], Joint oral statement on the working group on the review of the special procedures [February 2007], Joint oral statement on child participation to the Council [February 2007, initiative by Save the Children-UK], Joint written statement for the 4th session of the Council [March 2007], Joint oral statement on the occasion of the special event on Violence against children [19 March 2007], Joint oral statement on the Agenda of the Council [April 2007], Letter to the President of the Council, Mr. De Alba, on Institution building [May 2007], Joint oral statement on the programme of work of the 6th session [August 2007].

11Professor Paulo Pinheiro, Independent Expert on the UN Study on Violence Against Children; Juan Miguel Petit, Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography; John Dugard, Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the occupied Palestinian territories; Paul Hunt, Special Rapporteur on Health; and Ms Zerrougui, Chairperson of the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention.
the Commission. However, thanks to the Working Group, this question was debated in plenary. Latin American countries and some European states expressed strong support for a meaningful and innovative debate on the rights of the child in the HRC. The practice should be established in 2008.

In November the NGO Group held a strategy meeting in Geneva that brought together NGO Group members and external stakeholders (mission representatives from Brazil, Uruguay, Sweden and Slovenia, as well as UNICEF and OHCHR) to identify how child rights could be effectively advanced within the HRC agenda. The key strategies include actions to lobby for:

- A new, shorter and action-oriented resolution on the rights of the child;
- Renewal of the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography;
- A special event on mainstreaming the rights of the child;
- Integration of the rights of the child in the UPR process and a possible NGO parallel event during the March session.

While certain national coalitions reporting on the CRC were involved in the broader human rights system, the majority still only focused on the CRC. To enhance their engagement in the human rights system, the NGO Group provided information about the system as a whole and invited external resources to explain the role and functioning of the HRC.

3.3. Pushing for a strong international mechanism to follow-up the Study on Violence against Children

In 2007, the NGO Group’s Working Group on Children and Violence continued to constitute a platform for information-sharing and strategy work in respect of the follow-up of the UN Study on Violence against Children and, especially, the potential appointment of a Special Representative of the Secretary General (SRSG) on violence against children.

A formal NGO Advisory Panel on the UN Study on Violence was renewed to better integrate representatives from the regions. However, the Working Group ensured that the contributions of the broader NGO Group constituency were included in the NGO Advisory Panel initiatives (such as the call to appoint a Special Representative). As a result of these and the efforts of many other parties involved, the UN General Assembly resolution (A/C.3/62/L24/Rev 1) on the Rights of the Child, which included the recommendation for an SRSG on violence against children, was adopted in December 2007. In addition, another key activity was the production of Guidelines for NGO Reporting on Violence against Children to the Committee. These guidelines were welcomed by the Committee and were launched through CRIN in early 2008.

3.4. Regional activities against the sexual exploitation of children

Prior to 2007, the NGO Group’s Focal Point Programme against Sexual Exploitation supported NGO involvement in following up the Stockholm Congress, in the organisation of the Second Yokohama Congress (2001), and in specific follow-up in several regions. In 2006-2007, the work focused on a training initiative in Azerbaijan and direct contributions to the drafting of the Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, which was adopted on 13 July 2007.

During this period, the Focal Point also continued to support the work of the UN system in the field of child sexual exploitation. In particular, it mobilised NGO inputs into the work of the Special Rapporteur on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Pornography, into the UN Study on Violence against Children and into the review of implementation of the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (OPSC). This work demonstrated that the division between the two programmes of the NGO Group was artificial, as the Liaison Unit Programme ensured the identification, guidance and accompaniment of NGOs reporting under the OPSC while the Focal Point produced guidelines to reporting, undertook some training in the regions and advocacy in respect of the OPSC. Due to this increasing overlap between the work of the two programmes, the NGO Group decided to abolish the artificial division of work. However, the struggle against the sexual exploitation of children remains a priority of the NGO Group both through its work on the OPSC, as well as through its working group on the subject, and its direct involvement in the organisation of the Third World Congress in 2008.
4. Strengthening the NGO Group as an organisation

4.1. A year of transition

despite its many achievements, the NGO Group has been in need of reform in recent years in order to better respond to growing demands. It has needed to develop a strong vision and redefine its strategy, increase its visibility, and become less Geneva-focused.

2007 was a challenging year for the NGO Group, as the loss of a major donor (and a smaller one that provided co-funding) led to a financial crisis. As a result, the NGO Group had to reduce its staff and work to survive the crisis. Thanks to emergency grants from some of its member organisations and the Swiss government, the NGO Group was able to maintain one Liaison Officer to ensure that the secretariat’s core activities such as supporting NGOs in the reporting process were not interrupted. However, this crisis also provided the opportunity to rethink the role of the network and seriously address the challenges to becoming a stronger global voice for child rights. By the end of the year, the NGO Group was rebuilding financial stability through a combination of member organisations’ involvement in fund-raising and the hiring of a fund-raising consultant. By December, the NGO Group had secured funds from the Swiss, German and Swedish governments, as well as the Oak Foundation. It will continue to diversify its funding base in 2008 to improve its financial sustainability. In addition, with the new funds, a new team will be engaged which will be operational by the spring of 2008.

The crisis also provided the opportunity to improve the governance of the NGO Group. Its statutes were revised and adopted at an extraordinary General Assembly (November 2007). One of the main improvements was that the Executive Committee will be elected by the members of the NGO Group and will therefore no longer automatically be the convenors of the Working Groups. Another change was that national coalitions and child/youth led organisations would be encouraged to become members of the network to strengthen their links to the international human rights level and to include their expertise in implementing child rights at national level.

4.2. Looking ahead

By the end of 2007, the NGO Group had 77 members – international and national NGOs and networks fully committed to implementation of the CRC. The latest approved application was that of a long-term partner: CRIN (Child Rights Information Network). A review of Working Groups was also initiated on the occasion of the extraordinary General Assembly in order to formally create a new group (Children without parental care) and close down an inactive one (Health). This review will continue in 2008 to ensure that only the active groups are maintained. Once the new team is in place, the work of the secretariat will also be reviewed to ensure that it responds to the needs of the national coalitions, the NGO Group members as well as the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

To increase its visibility and to enable it to respond to the needs and requests from national NGOs and members of the NGO Group, it began developing a new website to replace the few pages it had on CRIN. With the help of the latter, the NGO Group will create a site which will provide a platform for national coalitions to share their experience in coalition building, reporting, and following-up concluding observations.

12Under the previous statutes, the Executive Committee was known as the Coordinating Committee.
5. Finances

As mentioned above, two long-time partners of the NGO Group suspended their funding in early 2007, due to budget cuts and co-funding requirements. Thanks to emergency fund-raising efforts, the mobilisation of members of the NGO Group and members of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, and a strong commitment from the Swiss government, the NGO Group overcame the crisis and emerged stronger at the end of the year. This timely support ensured that the NGO Group was able to continue its basic activities while rebuilding its funding base. Fundraising and accounting procedures were improved by the contracting of consultants for fundraising and accounting.

At the end of 2007, the two long-term donors that were lost earlier in the year were recovered, as the NGO Group still complied with the new funding requirements of the main donor (despite the budget cuts) and was therefore able to comply with the co-funding requirements of the other donor. Hence, after a difficult financial year, the NGO Group closed its 2007 accounts with a positive statement of expenditure to be absorbed in the first half of 2008, as well as a renewed level of activity and engagement of core staff.
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</table>
6. Staff and Executive Committee

At the end of 2007, the staff and Executive Committee consisted of:

**Secretariat staff**
Lisa Myers

**Fundraising and accounting consultants**
Séverine Jacomy
Sabine Cazenave

**Interns**
Margaret Brett
Sarah Wald

**Working Groups of the NGO Group**
- Armed conflict and displacement
- Child labour
- Education, literacy and media
- Indigenous children
- Juvenile justice
- National Coalitions
- Sexual exploitation
- Violence against children
- Human Rights Council

**Executive Committee**

**President**
M. Lennart Reinius
Plan International Sweden

**Members**

Ms Cindy Blackstock
First Nations Child and Family Caring Society of Canada

Mr Bernard Boëton
Fondation Terre des hommes

Ms Roberta Cecchetti
Save the Children Alliance

Ms Josephine de Linde
ECPAT International

Mr Klaus Heidel
Werkstatt Ökonomie

Dr Debabrata Roy
Laifungbam Centre for Organisation Research & Education

Ms Carmen Madrnan
ECPAT International

Mr Peter Newell
APPROACH Ltd

Ms Elaine Petitat-Côté
IBFAN-GIFA

Ms Hélène Sackstein
International Alliance of Women/Alliance Internationale des Femmes

Ms Cécile Trochu Grasso
Organisation Mondiale Contre la Torture

Ms Agneta Ucko
Arigatou Foundation

Ms Carolyne Willow
Children’s Rights Alliance for England
### 7. Member Organisations of the NGO Group for the CRC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Organisation Name</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Action for Children and Youth Aotearoa</td>
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<td>African Child Policy Forum</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>Anti-Slavery International</td>
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<td>Arigatou Foundation</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Associated Country Women of the World</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Association Francois-Xavier Bagnoud</td>
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<td>Association of Networks for Community Empowerment</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Assoziacione Grupo ABELE</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Baha’i International Community</td>
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<td>10</td>
<td>Center for Organisation Research and Education</td>
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<td>11</td>
<td>Children’s Rights Alliance</td>
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<td>12</td>
<td>Children’s Rights Alliance for England</td>
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<td>13</td>
<td>Christian Children’s Fund Inc.</td>
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<td>14</td>
<td>Coalition Against Trafficking in Women International</td>
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<td>Child Rights Information Network (CRIN)</td>
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<td>16</td>
<td>Defence for Children International</td>
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<td>Disability Awareness in Action</td>
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<td>18</td>
<td>ECPAT International</td>
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<td>Education International</td>
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<td>European Association for Children in Hospital</td>
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<td>Every Child</td>
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<td>22</td>
<td>First Nations Child and Family Caring society of Canada Incorporated</td>
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<td>23</td>
<td>Friends World Committee for Consultation (GUNO)</td>
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<td>24</td>
<td>Fundación Privada Intervida</td>
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<td>25</td>
<td>Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment [APPROACH Ltd.]</td>
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<td>26</td>
<td>Human Rights Watch</td>
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<td>27</td>
<td>Inter African Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>International Association of Women</td>
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<td>29</td>
<td>International Association of Youth and Family Judges and Magistrates</td>
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<td>International Baby Food Action Network</td>
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<td>31</td>
<td>International Catholic Child Bureau (BICE)</td>
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<td>32</td>
<td>International Council of Jewish Women</td>
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<td>33</td>
<td>International Council of Nurses</td>
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<td>International Council of Women</td>
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<td>35</td>
<td>International Federation of Business and Professional Women</td>
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<td>International Federation of Social Workers</td>
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<td>International Federation of Women in Legal Careers</td>
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<td>38</td>
<td>International Foster Care Organisation</td>
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<td>International Movement “ATD Fourth World”</td>
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<td>41</td>
<td>International Movement Against All Forms of Discrimination and Racism</td>
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<td>42</td>
<td>International School Psychology Association</td>
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<td>International Social Service</td>
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<td>Mani Tese</td>
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<td>51</td>
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<td>52</td>
<td>Plataforma de Organizaciones de Infancia</td>
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<td>53</td>
<td>Resources Aimed at the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect (RAPCAN)</td>
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<td>54</td>
<td>RDC [The “Right of the Child” NGO]</td>
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<td>55</td>
<td>Roshni Homes Trust</td>
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<td>56</td>
<td>Saint Vincent and the Grenadines Human Rights Association</td>
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<td>58</td>
<td>Save the Children – Sweden</td>
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<td>Save the Children – UK</td>
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<td>Soroptimist Club</td>
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<td>61</td>
<td>SOS-Kinderdorff International</td>
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<td>Terre des Hommes International Federation</td>
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<td>76</td>
<td>Young Men’s Christian association of Costa Rica</td>
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<td>Zonta International</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The NGO Group for the CRC is grateful to the following donors for their support in 2007:

**Governments**
- Sweden
- Switzerland

**Member organisations**
- Plan International Sweden
- Save the Children, Denmark
- Save the Children, Sweden
- World Vision, International
- World Vision, UK
- Ecpat
- SOS Kinderdorf, International

**Memberships**

The NGO Group is also grateful for the support and solidarity shown by the Committee on the Rights of the Child and national coalitions during the financial crisis.

**Participation in production of this report**
- Séverine Jacomy
- Lisa Myers
- Cindy Blackstock
- Roberta Cecchetti
- Elaine Pettit Côté
- Lennart Reinius
- Laura Theytaz Bergman

**Design**
- Steph Yiu

**Printing**
- Imprimerie Minute