Research into Achievements and Barriers to CRC Monitoring and Alternative Reporting in Asia

COUNTRY REPORTS
# Table of Contents

Acronyms and Abbreviations ........................................................................................................... 3
Introduction........................................................................................................................................ 4
Bangladesh....................................................................................................................................... 5
Cambodia......................................................................................................................................... 9
India .................................................................................................................................................. 13
Indonesia......................................................................................................................................... 17
Nepal................................................................................................................................................ 21
Pakistan.......................................................................................................................................... 24
Philippines....................................................................................................................................... 27
Sri Lanka......................................................................................................................................... 31
Thailand............................................................................................................................................ 35
Timor-Leste....................................................................................................................................... 38
Vietnam............................................................................................................................................ 40
## Acronyms and Abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BSAF</td>
<td>Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum</td>
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<tr>
<td>CYPMCR</td>
<td>Children and Young People's Movement for Child Rights Committee</td>
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<td>Committee</td>
<td>Committee on the Rights of the Child</td>
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<td>CRAN</td>
<td>Child Rights Advocacy Network</td>
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<td>CRC</td>
<td>Convention on the Rights of the Child</td>
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<td>CRM</td>
<td>Child Rights Movement</td>
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<td>CRWG</td>
<td>Child Rights Working Group</td>
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<td>CSOs</td>
<td>Civil Society Organisations</td>
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<td>CZOPPP</td>
<td>Children as Zones of Peace and Child Protection</td>
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<tr>
<td>IACR</td>
<td>India Alliance for Child Rights</td>
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<td>Indochildright</td>
<td>Indonesia National NGO Coalition for Child Rights Monitoring</td>
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<td>INGO</td>
<td>International Non-Governmental Organisations</td>
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<td>MJF</td>
<td>Manusher Jonno Foundation</td>
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<td>NACRO</td>
<td>National Alliance of Child Rights Organisations</td>
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<td>NCYD</td>
<td>National Council for Child and Youth Development</td>
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<td>NGOs</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisations</td>
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<td>NGOCRC</td>
<td>NGO Coalition on the Rights of the Child</td>
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<td>SPARC</td>
<td>Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>United Nations Children's Fund</td>
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Introduction

This is a compilation of 11 country reports that resulted from the study, "Analysis and research into achievements and barriers to CRC monitoring and alternative periodic reporting in Asia." They contain country-specific findings in terms of good practices, enabling factors, barriers, and stumbling blocks in the practice of CRC monitoring and alternative reporting in Bangladesh, Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor-Leste and Vietnam.

The study was commissioned by Plan Asia Regional Office. Its main purpose is to come up with a comprehensive set of data that can help increase the effectiveness of civil society organisations (CSOs) in the monitoring and alternative reporting on the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Representatives of the national CSO coalitions that Plan is liaising with in the 11 countries were the primary informants for the study. They provided information through self-administered questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The research which was undertaken from July 2012 to February 2013 also involved desk review and online research of alternative reports and other relevant documents from secondary sources.
Bangladesh

Country Context

Bangladesh is one of the most densely populated countries in the world with more than 152.9 million people\textsuperscript{1} inhabiting a land area of 147,570 square kilometres. The country has achieved some progress in terms of human development yet 31.5 per cent of its population still live in absolute poverty.\textsuperscript{2} Women are especially vulnerable with female-headed households amongst the poorest in the country.\textsuperscript{3} Children comprise more than 45 per cent of the total population, with more than 60 per cent of them severely deprived of shelter, sanitation, water, information, education and health.\textsuperscript{4}

Despite progress in the separation of powers of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of government, weak governance and structural problems continue to constrain the country’s development, including the realisation of children’s rights.\textsuperscript{5} Although Bangladesh is amongst the first countries that ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1990, the Government still maintains its reservations to the CRC articles related to freedom of thought, conscience and religion, and adoption, which contradict with the country’s Personal Law.

Many CSOs in Bangladesh provide children with basic services that they are unable to access from the Government. With the media, CSOs monitor and inform the public of the progress, gaps, and breaches in human rights. However, insufficient trust and cooperation from the Government hamper the effectiveness of civil society in promoting human rights and in development work. CSOs are facing restrictions with pending measures that would regulate their activities including Bangladeshi NGOs’ receiving foreign donations.\textsuperscript{6}

Bangladeshi Civil Society and Children in CRC Monitoring and Alternative Reporting

Civil society organisations including children were widely involved in alternative reporting as evidenced by the number of organisations that participated in the last reporting period.\textsuperscript{7}

CSOs in alternative reporting. Approximately 364 CSOs participated in developing four of five adult-led alternative reports submitted to the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

- The alternative report of the Adolescent Development Foundation was drawn from consultations with 46 CSOs and groups of adolescents of different socio-cultural

\textsuperscript{1} Population Reference Bureau. \textit{2012 World Population Data Sheet}
\textsuperscript{2} Poverty estimates as of 2010. Source: http://www.adb.org/countries/bangladesh/main
\textsuperscript{4} UNICEF. \textit{National Report Bangladesh. Global Study on Child Poverty and Disparities.} 2009
\textsuperscript{5} http://www.adb.org/countries/bangladesh/main
\textsuperscript{6} Human Rights Watch. \textit{World Report 2013}
\textsuperscript{7} Combined 3\textsuperscript{rd} and 4\textsuperscript{th} reporting periods. CRC Session 51, 2009
Research into Achievements and Barriers to CRC Monitoring and Alternative Reporting in Asia

backgrounds. The report focused on the implementation of adolescents’ rights in the country.8

- The alternative report of the Bangladesh Shishu Adhikar Forum (BASF) involved 235 CSOs working for the protection and promotion of children’s rights. Since its establishment in 1990, BSAF has participated in three reporting periods.9

- An alternative report was also prepared by a network of 19 CSOs working on children's rights, with support from Save the Children.10

- The alternative report of the Manusher Jonno Foundation (MJF) was developed in cooperation with 64 CSOs and partners working on children's issues across the country. MJF is a national NGO that promotes human rights and good governance in Bangladesh. Through partnership with other CSOs, government agencies, and research organisations, it helps ensure entitlements of people by building their capacity to demand for basic services and to protest against rights violation.11 It supports organisations that are addressing the same concerns with fund and capacity building.12

Children in alternative reporting. More than 5,000 children affiliated with various CSOs across the country participated in the development of a children's alternative report that was submitted to the Committee on the Rights of the Child.13 The report, which was prepared with support from the National Children’s Task Force14 and Save the Children, focused on education, health and protection issues.

Alternative Reporting Process and Methods

The participating CSOs were involved in collecting information through desk review of reports and data on children, and conduct of nationwide surveys, focused group discussions, and consultations to evaluate policy impacts and gaps of the Government in ensuring children's rights. Resource persons from civil society and Government shared their expertise in thematic areas of the reports. Other consultations and workshops were also carried out to validate the alternative reports.

Good Practices in CRC Monitoring and Alternative Reporting in Bangladesh

- Wide involvement of civil society and public scrutiny of government policies on CRC implementation

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12 MJF. *Bangladesh’s Alternative UNCRC Report 2007*
14 National Children's Task Force is a nationwide children's organisation in Bangladesh established to monitor the implementation of the National Plan of Action against sexual abuse and exploitation of children including trafficking
• Establishment of child-led children's rights monitoring and reporting mechanism across Bangladesh in preparation for the development of a child-led alternative report

The establishment of a child-led children's rights monitoring and reporting mechanism in Bangladesh created the enabling environment for children to directly monitor CRC implementation and prepare alternative reports. This undertaking was made possible through the collaborative efforts of MJF, Plan Bangladesh and Save the Children.

Through workshops, children were familiarised with the Concluding Observations and assisted in identifying key themes and developing monitoring indicators to assess the Government’s compliance with the provisions of the CRC, based on a set of criteria. Gathering of information took into account the evolving capacities of children in order to make the monitoring process child-friendly. Information gathered from the child-led monitoring activities will be used in developing a child-led alternative report in the forthcoming reporting period.

**Enabling Factors in CRC Monitoring and Alternative Reporting in Bangladesh**

• Strategic project partnerships and good working relations amongst CSOs throughout the country promoted collaborative conduct and increased the effectiveness of data gathering.

• The standing of Plan Bangladesh as a credible development organisation in promoting children’s rights facilitated the creation of strategic partnerships for children's rights monitoring and alternative reporting.

• The National Children's Task Force, a nationwide children's organisation, paved the way for wider participation of children in the development of the children's alternative report.

**Challenges, Barriers and Stumbling Blocks to CRC Monitoring and Alternative Reporting in Bangladesh**

• Lack of comprehensive, disaggregated and reliable data on children due to inadequate technical and programmatic capabilities of the Ministry of Women and Children Affairs in collecting data and monitoring the situation of Bangladeshi children. Repositories of information on children like databases and websites are not properly maintained. Data sources are usually incompatible and accurate information beyond the division level is hard to get.
• Differing methods of data gathering and monitoring. Standardised methods and tools across CSOs could have facilitated the data collection and consolidation as well as monitoring work.  

• Inadequate public awareness on the CRC and children's issues. Majority of the population is not aware of children's rights due to lack of proper dissemination.

• Prevalence of traditional attitudes against children's participation particularly on matters considered as taboo. For instance, adults express resentment regarding giving adolescents the freedom of choice in connection with reproductive health issues, which is a prevailing cultural taboo.

• Lack of coordination amongst CSOs. In spite of submission of the child-led alternative report under one child-led organisation banner of the National Children’s Task Force, follow-up with internal and external CSOs is inadequate. This has resulted in the lack of coordination amongst some coalition members. Some CSOs also tend to focus on their own strategy or on the strategy of their donors, consequently creating a gap in coordination amongst the INGOs and NGOs.

• CRC monitoring and alternative reporting are undertaken as project-based activities with a tendency to focus on achieving outputs rather than developing long-term commitments from partner CSOs.

• There is a weak enabling environment supported by Government to promote participation, transparency and accountability in reporting processes.

**Recommendations**

• Increase coordination with different CSOs and networks that engaged in alternative reporting in the last reporting period. Plan Bangladesh may take a facilitating role to get CSOs and networks under one platform.

• Plan Bangladesh needs to consider assigning regular staff as well as allocating financial resources to institutionalise support for CRC monitoring and alternative reporting.

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20 Based on semi-structured interviews with CSO representatives and Plan Country Office focal persons and review of alternative reports
21 ADF. 2008
22 BASF. 2007
23 Based on semi-structured interviews with CSO representatives and Plan Country Office focal persons
Cambodia

Country Context

Cambodia has 15 million people, 35 per cent of them under the age of 15 and 45 per cent under 20 years old. The country has attained political, social and economic stability in the last decade. Peace and political stability were re-established following the 1991 Paris Peace Agreement, a comprehensive political settlement that ended the many years of war, and widespread loss of human lives and destruction of State institutions. Despite this progress, poverty remains a challenge in the country with more than 30 per cent of its people living below the national poverty line. Majority of poor households (92 per cent) are in rural areas.

The capacity of the Government to carry out policies and deliver public services is hampered by a fragmented administrative structure, overlapping functions of different ministries, and complex business processes. International and local CSOs play a major role in providing support for basic services in remote communities. However, civil society is facing restrictions with a proposed law giving Government wide discretion to shut down CSOs. The Government has also targeted members of a major Cambodian human rights organisation for their human rights activities.

NGO Coalition on the Rights of the Child (NGOCRC)

The NGOCRC was established in 1994, three years after Cambodia's ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It is composed of 50 international and national organisations working for children's rights and other children's issues across the country. The NGOCRC had been involved in the last two reporting periods. It collaborates with the Government in popularising the Concluding Observations, including its child-friendly version. The coalition is in the process of developing alternative reports for the two CRC Optional Protocols. It is also engaged in other human rights monitoring, such as the Universal Periodic Review.

24 Population Reference Bureau. 2012 World Population Data Sheet
26 http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/Cambodia-20yearsonfromtheParisPeace.aspx
27 Population as of 2011; Poverty estimates as of 2007. Source: http://www.adb.org/countries/cambodia/main
31 Human Rights Watch. World Report 2012
32 Ibid.. World Report 2013
33 Optional Protocols on the involvement of children in armed conflict and on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography
Alternative Reporting Process and Methods

The alternative report generally followed the reporting guidelines of the NGO Group for the CRC. It involved a desk review of literature, fieldwork, and interviews with informants across the country. Data gathered was analysed and gaps in CRC implementation clustered according to the following articles: civil rights and freedoms; family environment and alternative care; basic health and welfare; education; special protection measures and other issues of concern.

The alternative report was prepared prior to the submission of the Government report. Thus, there was a need to update it when the Government submitted a combined second and third periodic report. This updating entailed expert review sessions to assess Government's compliance with the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the provisions of the CRC. Based on the experts' inputs, a team of researchers was convened to undertake a comprehensive updating of the report to encompass the progress of CRC implementation in the combined second and third reporting periods.

Cambodia’s Civil Society and Children in CRC Monitoring and Alternative Reporting

Various sub-sectors of civil society provided inputs throughout the alternative reporting process. Children were interviewed in the development of the alternative report. Also interviewed were members of youth groups, villagers and village chiefs, ethnic minority groups, NGO workers, donors, and representatives of UN agencies. In addition, members of the NGOCRC, relevant organisations, and children and youth participated in consultative workshops to validate the draft report and draw additional insights.

Good Practices in CRC Monitoring and Alternative Reporting in Cambodia

- A recognised voice in the monitoring and reporting of the implementation of the CRC
- Developing systems and tools for effective CRC monitoring

The NGOCRC developed a monitoring database and data collection tools to acquire information on the status and outcomes of CRC implementation across Cambodia. Organised into five thematic working groups -- civil rights and freedom, family and alternative care, primary healthcare and welfare, education and leisure and special protection, coalition members gathered data based on their respective organisational expertise and areas of operation. The technical working groups then analysed the data gathered and culled out issues of concern and corresponding recommendations. The coalition also established Child Advocate Networks in 11 provinces to monitor children's rights at the community level.

Enabling Factors in CRC Monitoring and Alternative Reporting in Cambodia

- Technical and financial support from Plan Cambodia, Save the Children, UNICEF and World Vision enabled NGO CRC to effectively engage in CRC monitoring and alternative reporting, and to develop the CRC monitoring database.

- The availability and involvement of experts in CRC monitoring and reporting on children's issues amongst members of the Coalition ensured that all aspects of children's rights are sufficiently covered in the monitoring and reporting processes.

- Linkage and collaborative efforts of NGO CRC with other CSO networks as well as government agencies allowed wider coverage and participation in CRC monitoring and reporting, and wider dissemination of the Concluding Observations.

- The credibility of NGO CRC as a coalition that monitors and prepares alternative reports facilitates collaboration with other CSO networks at the national and regional levels and with Government.

- Coordination with the NGO Group for the CRC in Geneva ensured that alternative reporting processes are consistent with the requirements and schedule of the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

- Linkage with other human rights monitoring mechanisms provided wider venues for reporting on the situation of children's rights and the eventual dissemination of the recommendations.

Challenges, Barriers and Stumbling Blocks to CRC Monitoring and Alternative Reporting in Cambodia

- Constraints in human and financial resources. Lack of resources prevents some coalition members from giving sustained commitment and participation in CRC monitoring and alternative reporting. On the part of NGO CRC, limited financial resources prevent it from maintaining the operational requirements and secretariat staff support for the five thematic working groups in CRC monitoring.

- The hiring of consultants to develop the alternative report. This limits the opportunity for coalition members to practise and hone their expertise in alternative reporting for the next reporting period.

- Prevailing traditional adult attitudes towards children hinder children's meaningful involvement in CRC alternative reporting. Policy frameworks that support children's participation are not in place. Many local CSOs have inadequate capacity to address safety issues which may arise when involving children in monitoring and reporting processes.

- Delays in the submission of the Government periodic report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child consequently delays the completion and submission of the alternative report.

- A proposed NGO law that will impose stricter controls for NGOs in Cambodia. This law is to have adverse effect on civil society’s involvement in the CRC monitoring and alternative

35 Ibid.
reporting. The NGOCRC has started dialogues with the Government on the importance of the role of CSOs in these processes in an attempt to mitigate potential challenges.

**Recommendations**

- Through coordination meetings with CSO members of the NGOCRC, encourage the development of a sustainability plan and the articulation of concrete commitments on the sharing of resources for the Coalition’s CRC monitoring and alternative reporting activities.
- Through collaborative discussions with donor agencies, negotiate funding support for the operational requirements of the CRC monitoring database and data-gathering activities of the NGOCRC and its member CSOs.
- Map available technical expertise and resources for facilitating children’s participation in CRC monitoring and alternative reporting, and enjoin Coalition members and other CSO networks to support the development of a child-led alternative report.
- In collaborative actions with Government and other CSO networks, include the conduct of awareness raising activities for adults on children’s participation.
- For Plan Cambodia:
  - Strengthen internal staff capacity on CRC monitoring and alternative reporting;
  - Increase coordination and partnership efforts with development organisations engaged in other human rights monitoring such as the Universal Periodic Review and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women.

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36 Based on semi-structured interviews with CSO representatives and Plan Country Office focal person
India

Country Context

India is the second most populous country in the world with over 1.25 billion people.\textsuperscript{37} It also has the largest proportion of children in the world with nearly half a billion children.

Rapid economic growth and increased government allocations to social services have contributed in improving the lives of millions in the country. Despite these achievements, wide disparities exist between and within states, and inequalities persist amongst different subgroups of the population, notably amongst women and girls, castes and tribes. An estimated 37 per cent of India's population live below the poverty line.\textsuperscript{38} Hundreds of millions of children live in absolute poverty without access to quality health care, sanitation, water, food, shelter, education, and protection from violence and abuse. The situation is exacerbated by the persistence of gender inequality and violence against women in the country.

Civil society in India has a long history of giving and voluntary service.\textsuperscript{39} Supported by an active media, civil society has been vocal in demanding for more accountability and transparency from Government. CSO engagements with the State range from strongly oppositional to collaborative actions. The Government and CSOs have converged in empowering communities, encouraging participation, strengthening democratic institutions, and improving access to basic services like health and education. They have also collaborated in the setting up of several institutions to promote funding for CSOs. This has led to the beneficiaries’ dependence on the State, which in turn introduced the risk of CSOs losing their autonomy and becoming implementers of public sector projects.\textsuperscript{40}

India Alliance for Child Rights

The India Alliance for Child Rights (IACR) was established in 2001 as a voluntary alliance and information-sharing advocacy platform to advance children's rights in the country. It consists of CSOs, activists, academia, research institutions, and other concerned citizens and entities working in support of children’s rights. IACR facilitates CSO initiatives on critical issues of social development. Since the previous alternative reporting process in 2003, it has coordinated collective processes focusing on the needs and entitlements of children.

Alternative Reporting Process and Methods

IACR has been coordinating a countrywide Citizens' Collective CRC Country Review for the development of the alternative report. Preparations began with the formation of a National Citizens' Collective CRC Review network. Members of this network facilitated the Citizens'
Collective Country Review where approximately 350 CSOs used a wide range of participatory data-gathering methods in making an inclusive assessment of the progress of CRC implementation.\textsuperscript{41}

**Involvement of India’s Children in CRC Monitoring and Alternative Reporting**

In school and out-of-school children, and children from rural and urban poor areas participated in consultations that were designed to include children in the Citizens’ Review process. Through child-friendly group exercises and the Score Cards, children assessed and rated the performance of Government on its commitments and obligations to fulfil children’s rights. The process allowed the children to gain knowledge and confidence in discussing their rights.

**Good Practices in CRC Monitoring and Alternative Reporting in India**

- Generating wide involvement of civil society in public scrutiny of government policies for children
- Promoting and building collective processes and operating in a coalition mode

IACR engaged children and adults in assessing the performance of Government in ensuring children’s rights. It developed and administered a Score Card as a tool to help children and adults in the process and to ensure proper documentation. The Score Card contains information on children’s rights and on the situation of children in India. IACR also provided workbooks and fact-sheets to CSO participants in the interstate consultations, widening civil society contacts and eliciting participation in the consultations from other CSO coalitions.\textsuperscript{42}

**Enabling Factors in CRC Monitoring and Alternative Reporting in India\textsuperscript{43}**

- Operating in a coalition mode and building collective processes. IACR promoted joint initiatives in alternative reporting by convincing CSOs on the importance of the collective review process as well as the inter-connectedness of rights and the obstacles to its realisation.
- The expertise of network members. The participation of a core group of able volunteers from a range of CSOs and institutions facilitated the involvement of civil society including children from across the country.
- Provision of opportunities to develop enabling skills amongst network members and information inputs and tools, such as CRC review and reporting workbooks. Technical support to smaller sub-national CSOs and community-based organisations have made possible the equipping of network members with the necessary knowledge and skills to facilitate participatory processes in alternative reporting.

\textsuperscript{41} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{42} Plan India. *Tracking CRC Implementation: Plan India’s Engagement in UNCRC Review and Reporting Process: October 2008–October 2009*
\textsuperscript{43} Based on responses in semi-structured questionnaires for CSO representatives and Plan Country Office focal persons
• Diligence in data-gathering, data tracking, consolidation, and facilitating evidence-based analysis helped to ensure a comprehensive analysis on the situation of children.

Challenges, Barriers and Stumbling Blocks to CRC Monitoring and Alternative Reporting in India

• Delays in the submission of the State periodic report. The Government failed to produce its third report on time and later submitted a combined report for the third and fourth reporting periods. The long wait for the submission of the State report dissipated the momentum developed amongst Alliance members in the process of preparing the alternative report.

• Lack of supporting data, limited written information on the issues raised, and timely access to reliable information. CSO reports and situation analysis are often without supporting data or research. Most CSO participants are willing to talk about issues in consultations, but few provide written information.

• Sustaining long-term engagement of CSOs and civil society members with diverse areas of interest and work. Due to uneven commitment and capacity for sustained involvement of some CSOs, the responsibilities in alternative reporting appear to rest more on some CSOs rather than on the entire alliance. Some do not give the time and attention required by alternative reporting

• Lack of appreciation of the merits of coalition work. Some CSOs and volunteers have limitations working in a coalition context due to lack of appreciation of the merits of collective advocacy. Tension sometimes arises amongst CSO partners that tend to prioritise the visibility of their respective organisations in collective processes.

• Prevailing traditional adult attitudes constrain children's meaningful involvement in alternative reporting. There is some tendency amongst partner CSOs and adult facilitators to discourage children from thinking for themselves.

Recommendations

• Improve coordination within IACR and amongst partner CSOs and volunteers through guidelines and protocols for engaging in CRC monitoring and alternative reporting.

• Continue providing technical and financial support to increase and strengthen the capacity of the IACR and its member organisations in CRC monitoring and alternative reporting. Data gathered also indicates the need for continuing support in strengthening the cohesiveness of IACR as a coalition. (Currently, there is no budget allocation for activities related to coalition building.)

• For Plan India:
  o Improve the staff’s knowledge and understanding of CRC monitoring and alternative reporting processes

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44 Based on responses in semi-structured questionnaires of CSO representatives and Plan Country Office focal persons
45 Ibid.
• Include CRC monitoring and alternative reporting in advocacy work and the Country Strategic Plan
• Provide guidelines that will support the coalition-building work
Indonesia

Country Context

Indonesia is the third most populated country in Asia.\textsuperscript{46} It has a population of more than 241 million, of which 27 per cent are children under the age of 15.\textsuperscript{47}

The country has experienced strong economic growth since recovering from the 1997 Asian financial crisis. Despite significant progress in poverty reduction, large segments of the population remain poor and there is widespread disparity across regions. Approximately 12.5 per cent of the population live below the national poverty line.\textsuperscript{48} The country is plagued with natural disasters, which have caused massive devastation and death for hundreds of thousands of people.

Millions of children in Indonesia are deprived of their basic needs for quality health services, education, child protection, and social protection. Thus, they are vulnerable to various risks such as morbidity, mortality, dropping out of junior and higher secondary education, and exposure to abuse and exploitation. The family's level of income, geographical location, and parents' educational level\textsuperscript{49} are factors that affect the lives of disadvantaged children.

Under Indonesia’s decentralised system of governance, the delivery of basic services, the enactment of local laws, and the protection of some environmental resources are responsibilities of District and City Governments. The devolution of these key functions and the authority of the National Government to District Governments has brought about positive as well as negative impacts. Many district laws are inconsistent with national laws including the constitution and children's rights. Few District Governments give attention to children's rights, and the health and protection of children. Decentralisation has also given rise to issues of accountability and likewise devolved corruption with allegations of rampant exploitation of natural resources by District Governments.\textsuperscript{50}

Indonesian National NGO Coalition for Child Rights Monitoring

The Indonesia National NGO Coalition for Child Rights Monitoring (Indochildright) was established in 1999 to monitor the implementation of children's rights, develop alternative reports, and advocate for children's rights issues. The Coalition has 32 member organisations working in different parts of the country. It submitted an alternative report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child during the second reporting period.

\textsuperscript{46} After China and India
\textsuperscript{47} Population Reference Bureau. \textit{2012 World Population Data Sheet}
\textsuperscript{48} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{50} Feedback from Plan Country Office focal person
Involvement of Indonesia’s Children in CRC Monitoring and Alternative Reporting


Good Practices in CRC Monitoring and Alternative Reporting in Indonesia

• Comprehensive review of CRC implementation in Indonesia.

In preparation for the third and fourth reporting periods, the Coalition assessed the progress of CRC implementation in Indonesia from 1997 to 2009 through a comprehensive two-year review. The review, which involved 51 CSOs along with 80 NGO staff as organising committee, researchers and facilitators, with support from the Consortium of International NGOs, had three components:

(i) Legal review to evaluate the compliance of existing laws with the principles and provisions of the CRC;
(ii) Research on the situation of children through in-depth analysis of the education and healthcare components with particular focus on child victims of armed conflict and natural disasters, trafficked children, and children in conflict with the law; and
(iii) Consultations with children from various social circumstances.

The consolidated findings serve as main reference in assessing the State Periodic report and in preparing the alternative report.

Enabling Factors in CRC Monitoring and Alternative Reporting in Indonesia

• Funding support from the Consortium of International NGOs and other international NGOs with similar interests in alternative reporting allowed for a wider coverage of the review process. Collaboration with CSOs that are not members of Indochildright facilitated wider participation of children in the consultations.

• Technical assistance of international NGOs customised for Indonesian context enhanced the capacity of Indochildright to engage with children in the consultations.

• Shared understanding and agreements on the relevance of CRC monitoring and the role of civil society in CRC implementation and monitoring paved the way for the comprehensive

51 The Consortium is comprised of Child Fund, Plan Indonesia, Save the Children, Terre des Hommes Netherlands and World Vision Indonesia
review. International and national CSOs recognise the importance of participatory processes in the development of the alternative report.

**Challenges, Barriers and Stumbling Blocks to CRC Monitoring and Alternative Reporting in Indonesia**

- Delays in submission of Government periodic report
- Lack of data and information on children from both the Government and CSOs. Some CSOs also have inadequate capacity for monitoring children's issues, CRC implementation, and alternative reporting. After the comprehensive review, Plan Indonesia discontinued its support to Indochildright, which indicate less capacity for CRC monitoring and alternative reporting, including the compilation of data.
- Insufficient coordination between some members of Indochildright and the Consortium of International NGOs in planning and executing projects. Conflicting policies and practices caused differences, for instance, in terms of reporting formats and reporting cycles of donors.
- Lack of legal identity of the coalition. The Indochildright is a loose coalition and operates on an ad hoc basis. These pose challenges in establishing formal agreements such as transfer of funds. The ad hoc nature of the Coalition also hinders getting the sustained commitment of its members in the continuous and on-going processes of CRC monitoring and alternative reporting. Some coalition members have become inactive after the development of the coalition’s first alternative report.
- Low public awareness about children's rights, the Government's obligations to submit periodic reports, and opportunities for community involvement in alternative reporting. This is a consequence of the limited dissemination of CRC.

**Recommendations**

Resume support to Indochildright for CRC monitoring and alternative reporting to improve the knowledge, understanding and skills of CSO members in these processes.

- Facilitate the conduct of activities and processes with which members of Indochildright can
  - assess and reflect their experiences in the comprehensive review of CRC and in alternative reporting;
  - collectively determine areas needing improvement, and
  - then formulate appropriate courses of action, including securing a legal status for the coalition.
- Provide technical assistance for the development of simple tools that can be utilised by CSOs for regular CRC monitoring with which they can analyse rights violation and budget allocation for children, and tools to elicit children's participation in the monitoring process.

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53 Ibid.
54 Ibid.
• Support Indochildright in institutionalising children’s participation in CRC monitoring, including child-led monitoring, and alternative reporting. An evaluation of the capacity of Indochildright in facilitating children’s participation can serve as starting point to determine appropriate capacity enhancement activities for CSO members of the coalition.
Nepal

Country Context

Nepal has a population of 30.9 million people, of which approximately 36 per cent are children under the age of 15. 55

The country is in the process of political and social transformation following a decade-long conflict. Although its political environment has improved, the country is still confronted with numerous socioeconomic challenges due to weak institutions and governance, scarce resources, inadequate infrastructures, and post-conflict violence. Poverty is widespread with more than 25 per cent of the population 56 and more than a third of its children living below the national poverty line. 57 Inequalities are rising. A large proportion of the children are severely malnourished, have inadequate access to education, and deprived of other basic human needs. Women continue to face various forms of grave violence.

According to Human Rights Watch in its World Report 2013, Nepal’s Government has failed to take significant steps toward fulfilling numerous key human rights commitments. The failures include a lack of movement on measures to improve the rights of women, children, and Tibetan refugees.

Nevertheless, CSOs are making a significant contribution to Nepal's social and economic development through public benefit activities in health, education, environment, social welfare and services to disadvantaged groups such as women, children, orphans and lower caste. 58

National Coalition for Children as Zones of Peace and Child Protection

The National Coalition for Children as Zones of Peace and Child Protection (CZOPP) emerged in Nepal as a movement that advocates for children’s rights during the period of armed-conflicts in 2001. It declared children and schools as Zones of Peace and urged adults and institutions, including the Government and non-state parties, to fulfil their obligations towards children in a strong, united, neutral, and effective manner. 59

Formally established as a national coalition in 2003, CZOPP has 26 member organisations. The coalition engages political parties and relevant institutions to advocate for the protection and promotion of the rights of children affected by armed conflict. Its members collectively monitor violations of children's rights and raises children's issues to the attention of relevant groups and institutions through press releases, media appeals, and meetings with concerned entities.

55 Population Reference Bureau. 2012 World Population Data Sheet
Civil Society and Children in Alternative Reporting in Nepal

Data gathered suggests that CZOPP was not involved in the last CRC reporting period (2005).

Another CSO coalition, the National Alliance of Child Rights (NACRO), submitted an alternative report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. NACRO is a group of CSOs working for children's rights with representatives from various regions in the country.

The report was developed through consultations with journalists, teachers and children across the country. Various groups of children participated in consultations and data gathering carried out by member organisations. These include children's clubs associated with members CSOs, school children, out of school children, stone quarry child workers, mechanical child workers, domestic child workers, child porters, rag pickers and street children, brick kiln child workers, children from urban poor informal settlements, sexually abused and exploited children, and conflict-affected children.

Good Practices in CRC Monitoring and Alternative Reporting in Nepal

- Broad involvement of children and civil society in CRC alternative reporting process

The consultations held in developing the alternative report served as venues to raise awareness on children's rights and issues, and not just for data collection. The discussions linked community problems with national and international issues and identified gaps in government accountabilities to children. The process also helped activate the participation of coalition members.

Enabling Factors in CRC Monitoring and Alternative Reporting in Nepal

- Collective efforts of CSOs with specialised expertise on children. Different coalitions jointly contributed in facilitating the processes as well as in ensuring the quality of the content of the alternative report. This allowed wider information gathering and participation of children. International NGOs played supporting and advisory roles while national CSOs led the process of developing the report.
- Technical support and capacity building for CRC monitoring and alternative reporting from Plan Nepal. These encouraged CSOs to work collaboratively to produce one alternative report. It also widened children and community involvement, which resulted to substantive information on specific themes and issues in the report.
- Positive response of grassroots communities, children, parents, including some government agencies to the issues raised and their readiness to participate in alternative reporting.

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60 National Alliance of Child Rights Organisations *CRC Alternative Report 2002*

61 Ibid.
Challenges, Barriers and Stumbling Blocks to CRC Monitoring and Alternative Reporting in Nepal

- Delays in submission of the State periodic report. These caused subsequent delays in the development and submission of the alternative report.

- Lack of systematic documentation of children's rights violation. Many CSOs are active in responding to cases of children's rights violations (for instance through Child Helplines) but documentation is their least priority due to limited human and financial resources.

- Limited capacity and access to various groups of children affected by breaches of rights, such as children affected by armed conflict and victims of sexual exploitation.

- Lack of a systematic process for involving grassroots organisations and children in CRC monitoring.

Recommendations

- Strengthen collaborative initiatives of coalitions to undertake CRC monitoring by developing standard tools and mechanisms for data gathering and systematic documentation of the status of children's rights implementation.

- Plan Nepal needs to make its support to CSOs a part of its programme so that human and financial resources are regularly available to them for CRC monitoring including child-led monitoring and reporting.

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62 Ibid.
63 Ibid.
Pakistan

Country Context

The country has a population of 180.4 million people and 35 per cent are children under the age of 15.\(^{64}\) Poverty is widespread in the country with more than half of the population (53.4 per cent) intensely deprived of the basic necessities in life.\(^{65}\) Children and women from the poorest households are the most disadvantaged by virtue of prevailing customs, social norms, and traditional practices which expose them to neglect, exploitation, abuse, and grave violence.\(^{66}\) For instance, they are discouraged from accessing health services and education or, worse, denied. Religious minorities are similarly disadvantaged. They experience discrimination and are subjected to persecution and violence.\(^{67}\)

Pakistan faced significant political, social and economic challenges over the past decade. The country's vulnerability to natural disasters and continuing security problems has exacerbated these challenges and derailed the Government’s efforts to attain its economic and human development goals.

The Government has instituted political reforms with the adoption of the 18\(^{th}\) Constitutional Amendment. A major amendment is the devolution of a number of key functions in basic service delivery (education, health, agriculture, and environment) to Provincial Governments. The devolution posed institutional and capacity challenges because the provinces were unprepared to take on the responsibilities.

While civil society is thriving in Pakistan, CSOs have limited political space as they are targeted and threatened with violence by radical non-state actors as well as entities within the Government.

Child Rights Movement

The Child Rights Movement (CRM) is a coalition of 108 CSOs working through collective advocacy on children's rights issues towards an enabling environment for children in Pakistan. It emerged from provincial and national consultations during the development of the alternative report for the combined third and fourth reporting periods (2009). In the process, the like-minded CSOs realised the urgent need to establish a child rights movement as a platform to tackle the widespread violence, abuse, neglect, and exploitation of children in the country.

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\(^{64}\) Population Reference Bureau. 2012 World Population Data Sheet


\(^{67}\) Human Rights Watch. World Report 2012
Pakistan’s Civil Society and Children in CRC Monitoring and Alternative Reporting

The Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child developed the alternative report in consultation with CSOs working for children's rights across the country. Members of the CRM participated in the consultations with the coalition's secretariat providing support in the alternative reporting process. Media was instrumental in highlighting and disseminating the issues raised by civil society on the situation of Pakistani children and CRC implementation.

Good Practices in CRC Monitoring and Alternative Reporting in Pakistan

- Strong coordination and linkage amongst various children's rights organisations across the country with the creation of the CRM
- Wide dissemination of the Concluding Observations and advocacy for the implementation of the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child

Following the Committee's review of the periodic report in 2009, CRM popularised the Concluding Observations and through print and the electronic media, disseminated to government agencies, civil society, communities, and children. This was carried out together with advocacy for the implementation of the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. CRM also conducted briefing sessions with parliamentarians, judges, police and prison officials, teachers, and children. It also published a child-friendly version of the Concluding Observations distributed amongst children.

CRM is advocating for the implementation of the Committee’s recommendations at the federal and provincial levels.

Enabling Factors in CRC Monitoring and Alternative Reporting in Pakistan

- A vibrant civil society collectively advancing children's rights through CRC monitoring and alternative reporting is a key factor. Coalition members working in the different areas of children's rights enabled the identification of a wide range of violations and issues, and the formulation of recommendations. Committed individuals cognisant of the importance of CRC monitoring and reporting helped in clarifying the issues and recommendations.
- Government’s recognition of CRM helps in pushing its agenda on behalf of children, alternative reporting included. The Ministry of Human Rights at the federal level and the Social Welfare Department at the provincial level acknowledge the role of CRM. The Government invites CRM to its various meetings and other events. The recognition of and rapport with the Government has helped facilitate CRM’s conduct of CRC monitoring activities.

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68 SPARC. *Alternative Report on the State of Child Rights in Pakistan by Civil Society of Pakistan, March 2009*
69 The alternative report did not indicate the specific role or involvement of children in the reporting process
Challenges, Barriers and Stumbling Blocks to CRC Monitoring and Alternative Reporting in Pakistan

- Absence of an information system for children's rights in the country. The government does not have a central data system for compiling and consolidating data on the situation of children. Moreover, while the Constitution of Pakistan has devolved policy formulation and legislative functions to the provinces, there is no formal CRC monitoring and reporting mechanism at the provincial level.

- Limited capacity in monitoring and managing statistical information on children amongst members organisations and community-based organisations. Insufficient number of trained staff, limited geographical outreach, and lack of financial resources are the key reasons behind the limited capacity.

- Social and cultural barriers, particularly for girl children, restrict children's involvement in CRC monitoring and alternative reporting. With a limited number of CSO staff trained in facilitating children's participation, changing the prevailing traditional attitude towards children remains a challenge. The few people trained in facilitating children's participation are based at either the national or the provincial capital.

- Turnover and change of staff amongst member organisations adversely affect CRM’s monitoring of the CRC. Such as, when a staff holding a key position in CRM leaves their organisation, and the person who takes over is not as proficient in CRC monitoring.

Recommendations

- Develop and strengthen the competencies of CRM members and community-based organisations in CRC monitoring, alternative reporting, and facilitating children's involvement in these processes.
  - Map available resources such as tools and training materials on CRC monitoring and on facilitating children's participation, and researches on children's rights situation in Pakistan which can serve as references in developing standard monitoring and alternative reporting guidelines. These can also provide indicators for capacity building of members organisations and partners, which can also be undertaken through sharing of information resources, community dialogues, awareness raising activities, and training.

- For Plan Pakistan: Make technical and financial resources for developing a mechanism to institutionalise CRC monitoring and reporting at the federal and provincial levels available to CRM.

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70 Based on semi-structured interviews with CSO representatives and Plan Country Office focal persons
71 Ibid.
Philippines

Country Context

The Philippines showed stable economic progress over the past decade amidst the global financial crisis, natural disasters, and political challenges faced by the country. The Government’s commitment to good governance and sustainable fiscal management has increased investor confidence and trust in the public sector. Despite these achievements, economic growth has not been inclusive.

The country has a population of 96.2 million, of which approximately 37 million are children. Approximately 26.5 per cent of the population live below the national poverty line while 45 per cent is at risk of poverty. Poverty incidence varies across regions due to income inequality arising from the uneven distribution of assets and unequal opportunities. The majority of the poorest households are in rural areas while urban poverty is increasing due to rapid urbanisation.

While the Philippines is a pioneer in the promotion and protection of children's rights, millions of Filipino children have no access to safe drinking water, sanitary toilet facilities, proper nutrition, quality health services, basic education, and other basic services due to poverty. More and more Filipino children have also become victims of various forms of violence, abuse, and exploitation. High population growth, vulnerability to natural disasters, and armed conflict in some parts of the country exacerbate this situation. Government allocation for social services is inadequate; institutional capacities for child protection are also limited including data collection and information system.

Philippine NGO Coalition on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (NGO Coalition)

The NGO Coalition was established in 1990 following the ratification of the CRC by the Philippine Government. Composed of 17 child-focused and child rights CSOs operating in the country, it monitors the implementation of the CRC in the Philippines.

The NGO Coalition has been involved in alternative reporting to the Committee on the Rights of the Child in the past three reporting periods. It disseminates the alternative report and the Concluding Observations to relevant government institutions and CSO networks to advocate for changes in government policy and practice and to ensure that these respond to specific issues of

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74 Population Reference Bureau. 2012 World Population Data Sheet
75 UNICEF Philippines. Annual Country Report 2010
children. The NGO Coalition also popularised the Concluding Observations among children to empower them to claim their rights.

**Alternative Reporting Process and Methods**

The Coalition sought and collected research reports, case studies, census data, and other statistical information during the preparation of the alternative report. It validated the information in the State periodic report and gathered information on the situation of children at the local level through consultations across the country. It also solicited feedback and additional information from experts on the different clusters of rights, and on the progress and gaps in the fulfilment children’s rights in the country.

**Philippine Civil Society and Children in CRC Monitoring and Alternative Reporting**

Adults and children provided inputs for the alternative report. Parallel consultations amongst adults and children gave each sector the opportunity to develop and surface their perspectives and to review the outputs of the other sector.

Children from various social circumstances who were involved in the consultations were selected through member CSOs and networks that participated in the development of the report. The views and perspectives of the children were integrated in the alternative report.

**Good Practices in CRC Monitoring and Alternative Reporting in the Philippines**

- Development of systems and tools for monitoring the implementation of the CRC

The NGO Coalition developed CRC monitoring indicators and a corresponding guidebook for CSOs. The purpose of the indicators and the guidebook is to help facilitate a substantive analysis of children’s rights situation and CRC implementation by the Coalition, through numerous consultations and consensus-building sessions.

Member organisations contributed technical expertise in determining the indicators for each of the following five clusters of CRC articles: civil rights and freedoms; family environment and alternative care; basic health and welfare; education, leisure and cultural activities; and special protection measures. They also identified the monitoring indicators for the general measures of implementation and the general principles relevant to each cluster of rights, as well as the corresponding sources of data.

Coalition members utilise the guidebook and the monitoring indicators in gathering pertinent data in their respective areas of operation. The information gathered will serve as inputs in preparing the next alternative report.

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By integrating CRC monitoring in the regular activities of its member organizations, the Coalition endeavours to address a key challenge encountered in alternative reporting which is the availability of reliable data on all aspects of the Convention.

**Enabling Factors to CRC Monitoring and Alternative Reporting in the Philippines**

- The NGO Coalition has a mandate focused on the monitoring and reporting on the implementation of the CRC. The shared interest to engage in alternative reporting sustained the initiatives of a small group of pioneering organisations which later grew. Joint actions of CSOs with common advocacies for children's rights facilitate effective CRC monitoring and alternative reporting.

- The common agenda amongst NGO Coalition members to continuously improve its CRC monitoring and reporting functions gave impetus to the development of a standard guideline to direct and facilitate the group’s CRC monitoring work.

- The participatory process employed in the development of CRC indicators helped to elicit appreciation and a sense of ownership for CRC monitoring and alternative reporting amongst the member organisations including the children.

- Recognition and acceptance of the role of civil society and the NGO Coalition in CRC reporting by Government and other CSO networks result in the Government’s use of the reports produced by CSOs in pushing for policy reforms to fulfil children's rights.

**Challenges, Barriers and Stumbling Blocks to CRC Monitoring and Alternative Reporting in the Philippines**

- Availability and collection of reliable data on children in all settings. Although the government and its front-line agencies have existing data collection systems for children-related information, there is little appreciation of the relevance of the process from the national down to the local levels. Local Councils for the Protection of Children that are mandated to monitor and report on children's situation are not functional in most local government units.

- Limited involvement of civil society in CRC monitoring due to capacity constraints of CSOs specifically in parallel monitoring and reporting on CRC implementation and violations of children's rights at the local level. This has also adversely affected the development of a unified CRC alternative report.

- Limited involvement of children and grassroots organisations. CSOs fall short in mobilising the participation of these sectors due to these sectors’ lack of appreciation of the relevance of these processes, along with the CSOs’ own capacity constraints.

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79 Based on semi-structured interviews with CSO representatives and Plan Country Office focal persons

80 Ibid.
Recommendations\textsuperscript{81}

- Strengthen partnership with government by developing champions particularly at local government units who will enforce policies on the implementation of the CRC, including monitoring and reporting on the situation of children.

- Intensify coordination efforts with CSOs involved in the monitoring and reporting of the two Optional Protocols to the CRC to facilitate sharing of information as inputs to the alternative reports.

- Undertake mapping and analysis of local CSOs including children’s groups that can be tapped for CRC monitoring and reporting at the grassroots level.

- For Plan Philippines:\textsuperscript{82}
  - Sustain partnership with national CSOs through sharing of tools, training materials, researches, and other resources on children’s rights in order to increase the involvement of civil society and children in CRC monitoring and reporting processes;
  - Provide clearer direction to improve the knowledge and understanding of line managers and staff on the relevance of being engaged in CRC monitoring and reporting; and
  - Integrate CRC monitoring indicators in the Programme Accountability and Learning System in Plan's data collection system.

\textsuperscript{81} Ibid.\textsuperscript{82} Based on responses shared by Plan Country Office focal persons in semi-structured questionnaire
Sri Lanka

Country Context

Sri Lanka has achieved significant progress in restoring political and economic stability following the end of the 26-year conflict in May 2009. National poverty rates significantly declined from 23 per cent in 2002 to 8.9 per cent in 2010.\(^{83}\)

The country has a total population of 21.86 million\(^{84}\) with more than 35 per cent under age 15.\(^{85}\) Its human development record has been historically high because of the government’s provision of free and compulsory education up to age 14, health services, and poverty alleviation schemes.\(^{86}\) Socioeconomic progress, however, has not benefitted all segments of the population. Income inequality in 2010 remains the same as in 2002.\(^{87}\) Post-conflict socioeconomic development in conflict-affected areas have yet to be revived and cultivated to its full potential.\(^{88}\) These conflict-affected areas include some of the most deprived districts with the lowest human development indicators.\(^{89}\)

In addition to poverty, key issues affecting a significant proportion of the country’s children population include disparities in access to safe drinking water and sanitation facilities, quality health services including maternal and child nutrition, quality education, as well as access to adequate protection from exploitation, abuse and all forms of violence.

Civil society in Sri Lanka played a crucial role in peace building and development. Despite their contributions, civil society actors face many challenges and most carry out their activities in unstable and risky conditions.\(^{90}\) According to the Human Rights Watch in its *World Report for 2013*, the Government of Sri Lanka has targeted civil society including human rights defenders who called for accountability for wartime abuses or criticised other government policies, with threats, surveillance, and clampdowns on their activities.

Child Rights Advocacy Network

The Child Rights Advocacy Network (CRAN) is a voluntary national structure of over 100 CSOs in Sri Lanka. Established in 2009, it is advocating for the promotion and protection of children’s

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84 Population Reference Bureau. *2012 World Population Data Sheet*
87 Gini coefficient of household income was 0.47 in 2010 as well as in 2002. Source: ADB *Country Partnership Strategy Sri Lanka 2012-2016*
88 ADB. *Country Partnership Strategy Sri Lanka 2012-2016*
89 http://www.unicef.org/srilanka/overview_1645.htm
rights. CRAN promotes the involvement of civil society in working for the realisation of children's rights and in pushing for implementation of the Government's obligations under the CRC. While still in its formation stage in 2009, its members were nevertheless involved in the development of the alternative report during the last reporting period.

**Alternative Reporting Process and Methods**

The development of the alternative report was a year-long process that commenced following the submission of the State periodic report.

The initial activity was the training on the CRC reporting process for 18 CSOs that were involved in report preparation. Groups of participants gathered data and drafted cluster reports following the eight clusters prescribed for CRC reporting. Data gathering entailed review of various reports, researches and statistics from national and international development organisations, as well as interviews with key informants from civil society. The draft cluster reports were consolidated in a residential workshop with a consultant finalising the alternative report. Due to the prevailing political situation in the country during the reporting period, the alternative report was not shared with external parties until after the Pre-sessional working group meeting.

**Sri Lankan Civil Society and Children in Alternative Reporting**

More than 800 children from disadvantaged groups participated in 25 consultations that were organised across the country. Amongst them were children from poor urban and rural areas, children with disability, former child soldiers, and children in institutions.

The children's perspectives and recommendations were documented in a separate report on the consultations with the children. This report was then annexed to the alternative report.

**Good Practices in CRC Monitoring and Alternative Reporting in Sri Lanka**

- Wide involvement of civil society in public scrutiny of government policies on children's rights. The alternative reporting process involved various CSOs working with children including grassroots organisations and children. Civil society participation was sustained in the entire reporting process -- from data gathering to the pre-session working group meeting to the implementation of the follow-up activities based on the Concluding Observations.

- Comprehensive and well-researched alternative report. This resulted in the influence of the recommendations contained in the report on the Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child. Specifically, 58 per cent of the 103 Concluding Observations of the Committee on the Rights of Child were recommendations taken from the alternative report.

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91 NGO Group for the CRC. 2006
93 Ibid.
• Popularisation of the Concluding Observations in local languages by CRAN. The simplified versions made the contents of the Concluding Observations more understandable to children and civil society. Consequently, this promoted constructive discourse on the implementation of CRC in the country. Key recommendations from the Concluding Observations were incorporated into CRAN’s three-year strategic plan.

**Enabling Factors in CRC Monitoring and Alternative Reporting in Sri Lanka**

• Availability of technical expertise and resources for alternative reporting helped significantly in the process. Technical and financial support from Save the Children in Sri Lanka served as impetus in mobilising the participation of civil society and children. Such support was especially crucial since CRAN was still in the formation stage during the last reporting period. A coordinator was recruited to oversee the development of the alternative report and to ensure proper inclusion of all the information collected.

• The use of CSOs’ existing data, reports, and children's rights situation analysis gave more credence to the alternative report.

• Involvement of CSOs working directly with children’s groups facilitated the participation of children throughout the alternative reporting process.

• Collective efforts amongst CSOs maximised the resources allocated for the development of the alternative report.

**Challenges, Barriers and Stumbling Blocks to CRC Monitoring and Alternative Reporting in Sri Lanka**

• Lack of reliable government data and statistics on children due to the absence of a centralised database in the country. Data on children is dispersed and difficult to access and validate.

• Time constraints. In the last reporting period, CSOs had only one year to gather data and prepare the alternative report. This compromised some parts of the process including rapport building with government officials, children, and other CSOs.

• Human resource constraints. Many CSOs working with children including grassroots organisations have limited knowledge and understanding on the CRC, children’s rights indicators, children's participation, and research methods. Thus, they lack the capacity to undertake CRC monitoring and alternative reporting.

• CSOs’ inadequate expertise and financial resources to obtain information from disadvantaged communities and groups of children, and to facilitate the participation of children and grassroots organisations in these processes.

• Limitation of many CSOs in incorporating rights-based approach and in mainstreaming CRC monitoring and alternative reporting in their organisational mandates. Some CSOs consider CRC monitoring and alternative reporting as temporary activities rather than continuous and

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94 Based on semi-structured interviews with CSO representatives and Plan Country Office focal person

95 Ibid.
long-term processes. This contributed to the limited appreciation of the importance of civil society's role in these processes.

- Lack of coordination amongst organisations involved in CRC monitoring and alternative reporting, and the tendency of these processes to be donor-driven. Based on CRAN's experience, some international CSOs that provide resources tend to dominate the monitoring and reporting processes.

**Recommendations**

- Initiate discussions and learning sessions about children's rights, CRC monitoring, and alternative reporting, within CRAN and amongst other CSOs. These activities will help promote common understanding of the processes involved, pinpoint areas for improvement, and promote consensus on these processes amongst all concerned. Thereafter, they will also aid in the formulation of a feasible action plan to develop the capacity of CSOs in undertaking these processes effectively.

- Formulate and implement a feasible action plan to improve the capacity of CRAN to undertake these processes effectively including facilitating the involvement of children and grassroots organisations.

- For Plan Sri Lanka:
  - Make a clearer articulation of Plan's role and involvement in children's rights monitoring and in facilitating alternative reporting within the context of rights-based programming.
  - Develop staff capacity on CRC monitoring and alternative reporting by allocating sufficient funds and staff for these processes.

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96 Based on semi-structured interviews with CSO representatives and Plan Country Office focal persons
Thailand

Country Context

Thailand is one of the fastest growing economies in Asia. Despite experiencing economic, financial, and political challenges in recent years, the country has achieved significant social and economic progress that lowered national poverty levels.\(^97\) Notwithstanding these developments, income inequality in Thailand is amongst the highest in Southeast Asia, and particularly high in northeast Thailand.\(^98\)

Approximately 7.8 per cent\(^99\) of the country's 70 million\(^100\) people are living below the national poverty line. Households from indigenous communities, immigrants with no permanent status, and refugees are living in absolute poverty, deprived of quality health care, education, protection, and participation in decision-making processes. They also have limited access to financial services and livelihood opportunities.

Government investment in the well-being of children significantly reduced child mortality and malnutrition rates and the incidence of diseases commonly affecting children. Literacy rates increased with more children going to school. Due to social and economic inequities, children from poor households continue to suffer from malnutrition, exclusion from education, trafficking, child labour and other forms of exploitation.\(^101\)

Thai civil society is diverse and numerous CSOs operate in many parts of the country. However, these CSOs and networks working on various social issues are relatively decentralised and become less active over time depending on events and issues.\(^102\)

There was limited effort amongst CSOs working with children to produce alternative reports during the past two CRC reporting periods mainly because there is no coalition focused on CRC monitoring and alternative reporting. In the last reporting period (2006), the National Council for Child and Youth Development (NCCYD) and the Centre for the Protection of Children’s Rights (CPCR) jointly submitted one alternative report. The NCCYD is a private-sector coordinating body for child and youth development. Legally registered in 1985, it coordinates efforts between the Thai Government and CSOs in support of Thailand’s children and youth.\(^103\) The CPCR is a Bangkok-based NGO working primarily on preventing and confronting all forms of abuse, exploitation and neglect of children in Thailand.\(^104\)

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\(^97\) [website link]
\(^98\) [website link]
\(^99\) [website link]
\(^100\) Population Reference Bureau. 2012 World Population Data Sheet
\(^101\) [website link]
\(^102\) ADB. Civil Society Briefs Thailand. 2012
\(^103\) [website link]
\(^104\) [website link]
Thai Civil Society and Children in CRC Monitoring and Alternative Reporting

The NCCYD and the CPCR developed the alternative report in cooperation with child and youth organisations and youth groups, as well as, local and international CSOs based in Thailand. The draft report was validated and finalised in a national workshop participated in by these entities.\(^{105}\)

Based on the experience of World Vision in alternative reporting, children and youth participated in consultations carried out during the preparation of the alternative report and the CRC review process held in Geneva.\(^{106}\)

Enabling Factors in CRC Monitoring and Alternative Reporting in Thailand\(^{107}\)

- The presence of international and local CSOs working for children's rights and issues helped significantly in promoting collaboration. Coordination work is in progress to synergise efforts and expertise of CSOs as a means of improving civil society involvement in CRC monitoring and alternative reporting.

Challenges, Barriers and Stumbling Blocks to CRC Monitoring and Alternative Reporting in Thailand\(^{108}\)

- Absence of a well-organised national CSO coalition engaged in CRC monitoring and alternative reporting. Coordination amongst child-focused CSOs in Thailand remains inadequate since the coalition was just recently established.
- Overly close relationship of some CSOs with the Government. This has given rise to reluctance on the part of some CSOs to report truthfully on the situation of children.
- Low awareness amongst grassroots organisations and children on the importance of CRC monitoring and alternative reporting.
- Some CSOs have limited capacity in effectively raising citizens' awareness on the relevance of participating in CRC monitoring and alternative reporting processes, as well as in managing scepticism on the positive outcomes and impacts of engaging in these processes.
- Availability of resource materials and tools on alternative reporting in the local language. Many of the resource materials and tools for alternative reporting are in English, hence, not understood by Thai children and grassroots organisations.


\(^{106}\) From responses in semi-structured questionnaire, representative from World Vision, Thailand. November 2012

\(^{107}\) Based on semi-structured interviews with CSO representatives and Plan Country Office focal person

\(^{108}\) Ibid.
Recommendations

- Plan Thailand can take a more proactive role in facilitating the creation of a CSO coalition that would engage in alternative reporting. Initial steps that can be considered are:
  - Explore collaborative actions with NCCYD, the entity that submitted an alternative report in the last reporting period.
  - A mapping of child-focused CSOs and networks working in remote areas of the country;
  - Collaborative discussions with INGOs to find common ground for complementation of efforts in these processes; and
  - Initiate and support collective learning sessions on CRC monitoring and alternative reporting to generate interest and develop a common understanding for engaging in these processes.

\[109^{\text{Ibid.}}\]
Timor-Leste

Country Context

Timor-Leste has made steady progress in political, economic, and social development after gaining independence in 2002 and emerging from extensive violence and destruction due to internal conflicts in 2006. Nonetheless, the country is facing numerous challenges.

Timor-Leste has a total population of more than one million with an estimated 41 per cent living below the national poverty line.\(^{110}\) Approximately 60 per cent are children and youth.\(^ {111}\)

Close to half of the poor (49 per cent) are children from poor households, 18 per cent youth.\(^ {112}\) The most disadvantaged children in Timor-Leste are from poor, large families with less educated parents in disaster prone rural areas. These families and children have less access to basic services. They also lack access to information and are often excluded in decision-making processes. They tend to continue harmful practices against child survival, development and protection.\(^ {113}\)

According to a situational analysis of civil society conducted by the Australian Council for International Development, local CSOs in Timor-Leste have limited experience in development processes due to the country's short history of independence. In addition, the CSO-donor relationship often causes local CSOs to give most of their attention to meeting donor requirements rather than focusing on the quality of their development intervention.\(^ 5\)

Child Rights Coalition Timor-Leste

The Child Rights Coalition Timor-Leste was established in November 2011 to coordinate the monitoring of the implementation of the CRC, the Optional Protocols to the CRC, and other human rights instruments that have an impact on children's rights. The Coalition consists of seven CSOs working to promote children's rights in the country.

Timorese Civil Society and Children in CRC Monitoring and Alternative Reporting

Involvement in alternative reporting is a milestone for local civil society in Timor-Leste since the State ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 2002. The Forum Tau Matan with support from the Timor-Leste NGO Group submitted an alternative report\(^ {114}\) during the initial

\(^{110}\) http://www.adb.org/countries/timor-leste/main
\(^ {111}\) Forum Tau Matan. NGO Shadow Report Presented to the Child Rights Committee Members. October 2007
\(^ {113}\) UNICEF. 2010 Country Office Annual Report. Timor-Leste EAPRO. UNICEF Timor-Leste Equity Tracker
\(^ {114}\) Forum Tau Matan. NGO Shadow Report Presented to the Child Rights Committee Members. October 2007
reporting period (2008). The development of the report did not directly involve children due to the limited capacities of CSOs in facilitating participatory processes amongst children.\textsuperscript{115}

**Challenges, Barriers and Stumbling Blocks to CRC Monitoring and Alternative Reporting in Timor-Leste** \textsuperscript{116}

- Lack of experience, expertise, and financial resources for CRC monitoring and alternative reporting amongst Coalition members. This challenge is mainly due to the Coalition being newly established.
- Lack of proper coordination between international NGOs and national CSOs in analysing priority children’s issues presented in the alternative report. In the last periodic reporting, two alternative reports presented two differing analyses of the same issues related to children's right to education, health, and environment. Ideally, one alternative report, not several separate reports, is submitted to the Committee on the Rights of the Child.
- Lack of clear understanding amongst grassroots organisations and some local leaders of the relevance of CRC alternative reporting.

**Recommendations**\textsuperscript{117}

- Develop and increase the capacity of the Coalition in CRC monitoring and alternative reporting particularly in facilitating participatory processes amongst children. A good initial step in determining sustainable appropriate actions is to map CSOs according to capacity gaps in terms of knowledge and understanding of CRC, relevant laws and policies on children, child rights situational analysis, and skills in facilitation. Existing resource materials and tools on CRC monitoring and alternative reporting could also be localised in terms of both language and context.

- For Plan Timor-Leste: Develop and improve staff capacity in CRC monitoring, alternative reporting, and facilitating participatory processes amongst children and grassroots organisations.

\textsuperscript{115} Based on responses to questionnaires for CSO representative and Plan Country Office focal person
\textsuperscript{116} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{117} Ibid.
Vietnam

Country Context

Vietnam is a one-party Communist State with a population of 89 million people. Children under the age of 15 comprise 24 per cent of the country's population.

One of the rapidly growing economies in Asia, the country has made progress in reducing poverty. Approximately 14.5 per cent of its population live below the national poverty line. The incidence of which varies significantly across regions. Large proportions of rural and ethnic minority populations have significantly lower incomes than those living in urban areas. Ethnic groups are amongst the poorest and have least benefited from economic growth.

Despite the remarkable progress in reducing child mortality rates, segments of the children and adolescent population continue to live in conditions of deprivation and exclusion. Challenges in the areas of hygiene, sanitation, child poverty, nutrition, child protection, and quality education and management remain.

Transparency, governance, and corruption in Vietnam persist and the political space is not conducive for civil society engagement. According to the Human Rights Watch in its World Report for 2013, the Vietnam government systematically suppresses freedom of expression, association, and peaceful assembly, and persecutes those who question government policies, expose official corruption, or call for democratic alternatives to one-party rule.

NGO Child Rights Working Group

The NGO Child Rights Working Group (CRWG) was established in 2006 to promote the implementation of the CRC through collaborative and coordinated efforts amongst CSOs working for children's rights and issues. It is composed of international and local CSOs including grassroots organisations, research institutes, experts and other individuals in Vietnam. It engaged in alternative reporting for the first time during the last reporting period.

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118 Population Reference Bureau. 2012 World Population Data Sheet
119 Ibid.
122 http://www.unicef.org/vietnam/media_14153.html
124 NGO members of the CRWG: Centre for Promotion and Research on Children; ChildFund; CSAGA; Plan in Vietnam; Research Centre for Family Health and Community Development; Saigon Children’s Charity; Save the Children; Terres des Homes; Vietnam Association for the Protection of Children’s Rights; World Vision
Alternative Reporting Process and Methods

The process of developing the alternative report for Vietnam took more than two years.

The CRWG undertook a rigorous review of reports, statistical information and researches from government, NGOs, and UN organisations. The Task Force it created to lead in the development of the alternative report on the combined third and fourth periods proceeded in defining the format and content. It also determined the processes it will entail according to the guidelines of the NGO Group for the CRC. The Concluding Observations from the previous reporting period was the main reference with its relevant provisions serving as starting points for each of the different sections of the alternative report.

The Task Force held workshops amongst member organisations, meetings and dialogues with Government ministries in the process of developing the alternative report. Consultations with children’s groups were conducted in areas where member organisations operated.

According to their respective expertise, Task Force members developed specific sections of the report. Draft sections were then presented in technical discussions for further inputs. The CRWG member organisations also reviewed and provided feedback on the draft alternative report. The draft was translated in the Vietnamese language to facilitate an appreciation and understanding of its contents and generate inputs from local CSOs.

An international expert finalised the report, which highlighted key recommendations regarding the identified gaps in CRC implementation.

Vietnam’s Civil Society and Children in CRC Monitoring and Alternative Reporting

Through participatory methods and activities, the Task Force engaged CRWG members and other CSOs including children in the development of the alternative report. The consultations with children specifically focused on children's experience in the following topics: violence, child participation, education, inclusive education, HIV/AIDS, migration, and trafficking. More than 300 boys and girls from all regions in the country participated in the consultations. An international expert commissioned by Save the Children consolidated the information gathered and finalised the report. International and local CSOs also provided comments and technical inputs to draft versions of the report.

Good Practices in CRC Monitoring and Alternative Reporting in Vietnam

- Creation of opportunities for wider and more meaningful participation of civil society including children in alternative reporting

There was wide and sustained participation from various entities and sectors in the alternative reporting process. This is a milestone for CRWG considering the political context in Vietnam. The CRWG purposely sought the participation of local CSOs since they have a good
understanding of the country’s context and conditions. By doing so, the CRWG elicited good inputs and advise from these organisations.

Giving due recognition to children's right to be involved in decision-making, the CRWG endeavoured to reach children from various social settings. The information children shared in the consultations were presented in detail in a separate children's report that was attached to the alternative report.

**Enabling Factors in CRC Monitoring and Alternative Reporting in Vietnam**

- Resource and task sharing amongst CSOs helped significantly in CRC monitoring and alternative reporting. The complementation of strengths and expertise amongst the international NGOs along with their positive working relations with government ministries and provincial authorities facilitated the work. The involvement of local CSOs as well as effective cooperation from community officials and volunteers made it easier to gather information on the situation of children from various social settings. Successful mobilisation of these resources was one of the key factors that in the development of the report.

- A CSO coalition with good leadership and coordination amongst members is an asset in CRC monitoring and alternative monitoring. These positive traits of the coalition helped it to overcome the challenges encountered through the lengthy process of developing the report. They also proved useful especially when members became discouraged, and participated and contributed less in alternative reporting activities.

- Constructive dialogue and transparent processes proved particularly helpful in the coalition’s engagement with government. The coalition overcame the challenges arising from the limited understanding and knowledge of CRC reporting amongst the government line ministries.

- Information, technical support and advice from Plan Liaison Office and NGO Group in Geneva ensured that reporting processes were consistent with the requirements and schedule of the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

**Challenges, Barriers and Stumbling Blocks to CRC Monitoring and Alternative Reporting in Vietnam**

- A limited understanding on the part of some Government entities about CRC monitoring and alternative reporting, and the role of civil society in these processes particularly at grassroots level.

- Constraints in obtaining accurate, updated and reliable data which affects generating comprehensive findings and recommendations to improve policies for children.

- Sustaining the momentum and involvement of the members of the coalition. The length of the alternative reporting process sometimes causes tension amongst those involved. There is

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126 Based on semi-structured interviews with CSO representatives and Plan Country Office focal person
127 Ibid.
the desire to finish and submit the alternative report, as well as having to wait for the strategic and best time to submit the completed report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child in Geneva. Similarly, the length of the process dissipated the interest and enthusiasm of some CSOs, resulting in less participation of some from the process.

- Limited technical capacity of some member organisations to undertake CRC monitoring and alternative reporting, and in facilitating children’s participation. Some member organisations are constrained by limited human and financial resources from making a long-term commitment in these processes. Consequently, this affects not only the alternative reporting process but also the scope and quality of the alternative report.

**Recommendations**

- Enhance CRWG’s internal capacity and collaborative efforts in CRC monitoring and alternative reporting.
  This can be done through assessment and reflection sessions where CRWG members can collectively draw lessons from their experiences in engaging in alternative reporting, and determine areas for improvement and what actions to take.

- Develop guidelines and protocols for decision-making and for collective actions of the coalition.
  Measures to minimize instances of taking undue credit and challenges in ownership for collective efforts of the CRWG could be included.

- Strengthen coordination and communication with Plan Liaison Office and NGO Group in Geneva.

- For Plan Vietnam: Consider integrating institutional support to CRWG in its programme priorities in order to increase CRWG’s capacity to undertake effective monitoring of CRC.

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128 Based on semi-structured interviews with CSO representatives and Plan Country Office focal persons