

HOW TO ADVANCE CHILDREN'S RIGHTS USING RECOMMENDATIONS FROM UNITED NATIONS & REGIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS MONITORING & REVIEW PROCESSES

Summary

International and regional human rights bodies monitor and review progress made on the implementation of human rights treaties on a regular basis and continually issue recommendations to States to improve the situation of human rights in each country. Civil society plays a crucial role in monitoring progress and challenges for children's rights on the ground. Many civil society practitioners know about these processes and contribute to these recommendations but they are not always followed up systematically after States have received them. At the same time, many within civil society do not know about these processes and recommendations and miss opportunities that could strengthen ongoing work.



This guide aims to empower and inspire civil society practitioners to follow-up, use and make the most of these recommendations as part of their daily work to advance realisation of children's rights in their countries. To that end, it provides a *step-by-step* plan of activities to consider, with case studies and practical tips to help that journey. It also provides some additional links with background information for those with less experience in this field.

Who is this guide for? This guide aims to assist *all* civil society actors - both individuals and organisations - working at country level and *wishing to take action on the recommendations* their State received from a UN treaty body (such as the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child) or a regional treaty body (such as the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child) or from the UN Universal Periodic Review (UPR) process. The guide also helps civil society practitioners and organisations wishing to *step-up their work on State accountability* to children and *strengthen their advocacy messages and arguments on any child rights issues*, using these recommendations.

How to use this guide? Knowledge and experience with the UN and regional human rights system and previous experience in this work vary from one individual to another. And depending on your organisation's resources, size, scope, network and priorities, you may be able to undertake all or some of the activities suggested in the guide. Some sections and links may therefore be more or less relevant for you. Feel free to navigate and use whatever

Note about the scope of the guide

This guidance focuses on the United Nation's (UN) and regional treaty bodies and UPR monitoring and review processes which are cyclical and offer regular occasions to interact with States and civil society and adopt recommendations for each State. Some regions have established their own regional human rights cyclical monitoring and review processes (eg. the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child) and this tool is also applicable for recommendations resulting from these processes.

Other bodies, such as the UN General Assembly, the UN Human Rights Council, UN Special Procedures and Regional human rights Commissioners, participate in this human rights monitoring work and may issue recommendations to individual States or to all States occasionally. Under the UN Sustainable Development Goals monitoring process, States and civil society also engage in Voluntary National Reviews. As these procedures work quite differently from the treaty body monitoring system or the UPR, this tool does not include specific guidance on how to use their recommendations in your work.

makes sense to you and your organisation at this point in time. Any action you may be able

to undertake on UN and regional recommendations will certainly contribute to your journey towards the realisation of children's rights in your country!

Table of contents

Part 1. Introduction	1
Part 2. Guidance: How to follow-up recommendations from UN and regional monitoring and review processes and use them in your work	7
Step 1: Select the UN and regional recommendations you want to use	8
Step 2: Communicate and raise awareness about UN and regional recommendations	12
Step 3: Design an advocacy plan and advocate	14
Step 4: Monitor the implementation of UN and regional recommendations on a regular and continuous basis	19
Annexes and useful resources	22

Part 1. What are UN and regional recommendations, where to find them and why are they useful?

For those of you not familiar with UN and regional human rights monitoring and review processes, here is a short recap of the key things you need to know before proceeding to Part 2 on HOW to use the recommendations.

What are United Nations and regional children's rights recommendations?

The UN has created several human rights monitoring and review processes with the mandate to ensure that the [international human rights treaties](#) and obligations accepted by States all around the world are actually implemented. At the international level, these processes are the “treaty body system” and the “Universal Periodic Review” (UPR).

What are **UN and regional monitoring and review processes**? [Click here to find out.](#)

At the regional level, intergovernmental bodies have also established similar processes to monitor and review regional human rights treaties, often referred to as “committees” or “commissions” such as the [African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child \(ACERWC\)](#), the [African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights \(ACHPR\)](#) and the [European Committee of Social Rights](#).

UN and regional children's rights recommendations are made by these human rights monitoring and review processes on a cyclical basis every 2 to 5 years. While their name, format and content may vary, they always target a specific State, they often relate to children's rights and they include actions that the State should undertake to improve the realisation of children's rights as protected in the international or regional commitments they have undertaken. Once recommendations are issued by these processes, States have a duty to implement them while civil society and the human rights monitoring and review processes are meant to follow-up States' implementation.

How to find UN and Regional recommendations? There are different ways to find the recommendations, both through database search or manual search. [Please click here to find some tips on how to find them.](#)

Examples of recommendations on children's rights from United Nations and regional monitoring and reporting processes

These examples illustrate that recommendations to the same State on a specific child rights issue may be formulated by different UN and regional monitoring and review mechanisms.

Child marriage – Example of recommendations made to Benin

- “Recommends that the State Party provides clear provisions to set the minimum age of marriage at 18 with no exceptions whatsoever, and ensure accountability against individuals who are responsible for getting children into the practice of child marriage”, [Recommendation of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, 2019.](#)
- “Redouble its efforts to significantly reduce the rates of neonatal and maternal mortality, harmful practices, such as female genital mutilation, child marriage and forced marriage”, [UPR recommendation made by Burkina Faso \(supported by Benin\), 2018.](#)
- “Recommends that the State party take concrete measures to prevent and combat child and forced marriage of girls:
 - a) By ensuring that the minimum age of marriage as set out in the Children's Act be strictly enforced;
 - b) By developing awareness-raising campaigns and programmes on the harmful effects of child marriage on the physical and mental health and well-being of girls, targeting households, local authorities, religious leaders, judges and prosecutors;
 - c) By establishing protection schemes for victims of child and forced marriage who file a complaint”, [Recommendation of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2016.](#)

Environment and climate change – Example of recommendations made to Austria

- “Continue efforts to develop and strengthen the necessary legislative frameworks that address cross-sectoral environmental challenges, including climate change adaptation and mitigation frameworks, and ensure that women, children, persons with disabilities, and indigenous and local communities are meaningfully engaged in its implementation”, [UPR Recommendation made by Fiji \(supported by Austria\), 2021.](#)
- “Ensure that its climate mitigation policies, in particular those concerning the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in line with the State party's international commitments, are compatible with [...] the rights of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and an adequate standard of living, and that the special vulnerabilities and needs of children, as well as their views, are systematically taken into account throughout the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of these policies”, [Recommendation of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2020.](#)

What does “follow-up” and “use” of UN and regional child rights recommendations mean?

You can use these recommendations by “**following-up**” on them (see the “follow-up” stage in the chart below) that is by monitoring and documenting how/if the State takes concrete actions to implement the recommendations it has received. We, as civil society, have first-hand knowledge and complement other monitoring efforts carried out by the monitoring and review processes, as well as by national, regional or UN entities.

There are two main approaches or options to follow-up:

- You can concentrate on a single monitoring or review process/mechanism and only refer to the recommendations it issues (e.g. all recommendations contained in the latest Concluding Observations made to your country by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child) to push your State to implement them. We call this a **«Process-based Approach»**.¹
- OR you can focus on one or several themes (e.g. children affected by armed conflicts) and refer to all the recommendations all UN and regional human rights monitoring and review processes issued on these themes to push your State to implement them. We call it **«Thematic or “integrated follow-up” approach»**

Why is “integrated follow-up” a more strategic option?

Many organisations tend to choose a “Process-based Approach” and focus their follow-up work on the recommendations issued by only one UN or regional human rights monitoring and reviewing process (e.g. Concluding observations from the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child or UPR recommendations). Although this focused and selective approach may seem easier, it actually proves quite ineffective when striving to advance State implementation of specific rights. Unless you need to do this for donor purposes or because you are also looking at strengthening one particular process, we would encourage you to consider taking an integrated approach.

“Integrated follow-up” is efficient and effective because it enables you to have an overview of all the recommendations your State has received from different UN or regional processes or human rights mechanisms and is meant to implement on a particular child rights issue, such as on “refugee children”, on “access to health”, on “child marriage” or on “school dropouts”. It

¹ You can find an example of process-based guidance on Child Rights Connect’s website. For example a [guidance on following-up to UPR recommendations on children’s rights](#) and a [guidance on following-up Concluding Observations of the CRC Committee](#).

can help you draw links between these recommendations which reinforce each other, give you stronger arguments in your advocacy and maximise the potential to get them implemented. It helps you better understand the State's reality and the various stakeholders relevant to engage with to ensure a coordinated implementation of the recommendations.

This integrated approach is also favoured by the United Nations and States in order to adequately address the growing number of recommendations States receive. This is illustrated in a number of guidance documents developed by the UN² which refer to a “holistic approach” to follow-up, as well as with the establishment of [national mechanisms for reporting and follow-up](#) or “NMRF”.

Who should be involved in follow-up?

To make sure that UN and regional recommendations on children's rights received by your State are acted upon, you need to collaborate and coordinate your work with other stakeholders such as governments, national human rights Institutions (NHRI), UN agencies and other civil society organisations and children. You will also need support from colleagues and managers within your organisation.

To find out more about who to involve and why, please [Click here for a stakeholders' analysis](#).

² Such as OHCHR's Practical Guide for Civil Society: How to follow-up UN human rights recommendations (2013), p.50. Other documents highlighting the importance of integrated approach are from [the Universal Rights Group](#) and the [Danish Institute for Human Rights](#).

All human rights monitoring and review mechanisms processes are cyclical and follow a similar format:

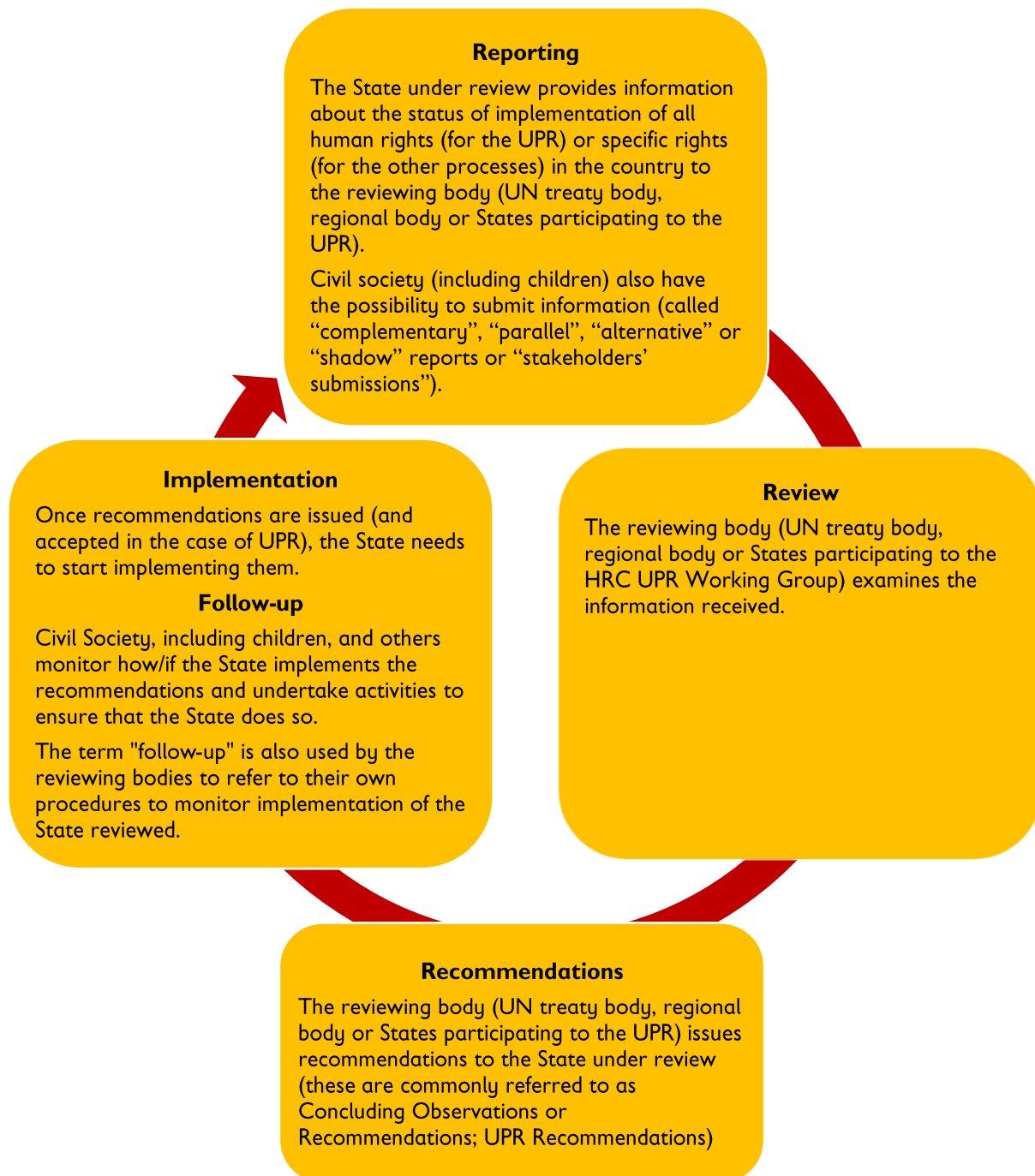


Table showing the monitoring and review cycle and where the implementation and follow-up phase come in.

Why does follow-up and the use of UN and regional recommendations strengthen your work?

Whichever approach you use and even if these are used simultaneously, following up and referring to UN and/or regional recommendation on a regular basis in your advocacy, communications, donor engagement or project and programme development work can provide many benefits:

It helps you apply the rights-based approach to advancing children's rights:

- It strengthens your advocacy and communications' arguments: Working with UN and regional recommendations offers political traction to your existing work. Since issues addressed in the recommendations are deemed to be an international or regional priority, they are less likely to be ignored by the State. As such, they offer political arguments for civil society and for rights-holders (including children) to demand rights and hold duty bearers to account.
- It provides solid evidence to research and publications: As they are informed both by the State and civil society, UN and regional recommendations often provide solid evidence of the issue addressed.
- It offers periodic opportunities for action: The anticipated release of new recommendations, as well as the content of the recommendations, can be useful for work planning.
- It opens new partnership possibilities with other civil society actors, networks or coalitions: Other civil society actors in your country may be interested or engaged in follow-up. If you engage in follow-up activities, this can help you create or strengthen partnerships through joint and coordinated follow-up work with others.
- It offers opportunities for children to engage in monitoring processes: for example, they can be informed of the recommendations that exist, take part in the selection of recommendations to follow-up and/or in the design of follow-up activities, participate to advocacy activities to encourage the State's implementation of recommendations, etc.. The accountability of your State towards children as rights-holders is reinforced.

It gives credibility to your organisation:

- It shows that your organisation's work is well informed: Knowing about your State's international and regional human rights obligations and latest child rights recommendations gives your advocacy asks and priorities more relevance and credibility.

- It helps you gain recognition from the State: While the primary duty to implement the recommendations rests with States, the State may need technical support and complementary initiatives from civil society during the implementation stage. Being a “go to” actor on follow-up will strengthen the relationship with State authorities.
- It makes your organisation more attractive to donors: By referring to information contained in UN and regional recommendations in project or programme proposals, you assure donors that you are aware of and are following human rights processes. Donors who are keen on the human rights-based approach to development and sustainable development would particularly appreciate this competence.

Part 2. Guidance

How to follow-up recommendations from UN and regional monitoring and review processes, and use them in your work

The following 4 steps will give you clear directions, tips and ideas to help you compile an effective activity plan on follow-up and use of UN and regional child rights recommendations.

These are only suggested steps and actions. They are not compulsory nor exhaustive – your follow-up work will depend on what you want to achieve, your local and national contexts, available resources and any upcoming opportunities to strengthen children’s rights.

[Click here for a template you could download and adapt for your activity plan.](#)

[Click here for a template you could download and adapt for your UN recommendations’ tracking matrix.](#)

Among the activities you can add in your activity plan is the development of your own recommendations’ tracking matrix to help you track progress your State is doing on the child rights recommendations you will prioritise. The 4 steps will also guide you gradually on how to do that.



Here is a visualisation of the various main “follow-up” steps suggested in this guidance.

Step 1: Select the UN and regional recommendations you want to use.

FIND the UN and regional recommendations that have been made to your State

Since children’s rights are protected by all human rights treaties in various ways, any UN or regional monitoring and review process may have recommended something to improve the children’s rights situation in your country (see examples in table page 5).

The first thing to do to use UN and regional recommendations is to identify those which are relevant for you.

For guidance on how to search for these recommendations on the [UN database](#) or the [webpages of the different processes](#), [click here](#).

Map the UN and regional recommendations that can be relevant to your work

Once you have the full overview of UN and regional recommendations, select those that you can use in your work:

- Are there recommendations relevant and useful to my organisation’s objectives and activities? To my thematic area of work? To a current campaign or high-level event? To a topic prioritised for a funding opportunity?
- Are there recommendations which, if achieved, could indirectly help my work (e.g. the establishment of child-friendly justice or adoption of a child law)?
- Are there recommendations specifically addressed to civil society actors at local, national or international level?
- Are there several relevant recommendations (from the same body/mechanism or different ones) on the same issue? Could this issue become a priority theme for me?

- In case your organisation was involved in any reporting process, check if there is any recommendation that resulted from your advocacy.

TIP:

- If you work in a child rights coalition or network or in a big organisation, all children's rights related recommendations could be relevant and their follow-up can be divided between the members and colleagues.
- Do not forget to share your findings with relevant peers/colleagues who could pick up recommendations you have not selected.
- In case children were involved in the monitoring and reporting process, you should keep them informed about the result of the review and do this step together with them to identify which recommendations they would like to focus on.

You can then group the selected recommendations by theme/sub-theme in a [recommendations' tracking matrix](#) where you will include:

- the human rights monitoring and review process that made the recommendation
- the reaction of your State if any (especially relevant for UPR recommendations). For more information, please [click here](#).
- the date of the recommendation and deadline by which it should be implemented. You can also add here deadlines of some of the monitoring and review processes that do their own follow-ups or mid-term reviews.³

Prioritise the UN and regional recommendations that you want to use

If your selection comprises more recommendations than you can feasibly use in your work, you may want to identify which ones you should prioritise. Prioritisation can be done following a number of factors. Here are some elements to take into account when prioritising recommendations:

³ For the UPR, this information can be found here :

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/upr/pages/uprimplementation.aspx>; and for the treaty body system this information is available here : <https://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/pages/followupprocedure.aspx>

Timeline of the recommendation	• Is it a recent recommendation? Or, on the contrary, is it meant to have already been implemented by the State? • What is the timeline for the implementation of this recommendation?
“Power” of the recommendation	• Who issued the recommendation? A treaty-body (independent experts) or the UPR (States)? (this can help identify political dimension of a recommendation and which ministry is in charge) • Has it been identified as “urgent”? Is it a repetition of a previous recommendation? • Does it put a high political pressure on my State? Is the issue politically sensitive? Have several monitoring and review processes given a similar recommendation? Are there any reasons the government might be more likely to act on this recommendation? (eg. priority of the State, pressure and/or assistance of the international community, availability of resources)? For the UPR process, it is useful to know what is the State’s position on the recommendation (accepted/supported or rejected/noted) • Is there a risk this recommendation will be ignored by the State if civil society does not follow up on its implementation? • Is this a priority raised by children themselves? It is important to take into account what is most important and urgent for them. This may have been expressed through a consultation or existing surveys.

Feasibility of the recommendation	• Is the recommendation clear and actionable? • Is there an obvious authority responsible for implementing it? • What is my State's capacity and political will to implement this recommendation? Has the State already developed an action plan to implement it? • What budget implications will implementation of the recommendation have? • Are UN agencies planning to support the government with implementation? (UN Committees regularly recommend States to seek technical assistance from UNICEF and other UN agencies) • What would local-national coordination look like in the implementation process? • Is there a legislative or policy making opportunity (consultation, drafting for legislation, national action plan) ongoing or planned where these recommendations could be relevant?
Impact of the recommendation for my work and organisation	• Are there risks for my organisation/network/the children and families we work with, if we publicly work on these recommendations? If you are at risk of reprisals for your work on UN or regional recommendations, you can check OHCHR reprisal page and/or get assistance from the NGO International Service for Human Rights, contact information@ishr.ch. • What resources does my organisation/network have to work on recommendations? How many recommendations can we work on? Is there a funding opportunity where we could include activities related to follow-up of UN and regional recommendations? • Does my organisation have the capacity to offer technical support to the government in developing an implementation plan jointly? If not, who can do this? • Which other civil society partners could work on this recommendation? • Can my organisation/network measure the implementation of this recommendation? Can I lobby UN agencies and/or institutional donors with presence in the country to support the government with implementation?

Intersectionality	• Does this recommendation impact children differently, for example because of their sex, sexual orientation or gender identity and expression, race, ethnicity, caste or indigeneity, disability, socio-economic or migrant status? If so, it might be relevant to analyse these dimensions and prioritise it to promote the rights of specific groups of children. • Does relevance to particular groups mean we should be engaging with civil society organisations (CSOs) led by or specifically focused on these groups, such as women's rights organisations, organisations of people with disabilities or traditional leaders, or organisations specifically monitoring implementation of treaties with a non-discrimination or inclusion focus such as the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) or the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)? • Does existing data show that some groups are worse affected by failure to deliver on this right or recommendation? This data might be important for advocacy, for prioritising implementation and finding allies.
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STEP 2: Communicate and raise awareness about UN and regional recommendations

For the recommendations to be useful and used, they need to reach the public, children and other relevant stakeholders.

Translate the recommendations into accessible language

Advocate for your State to translate them into national language(s) as well as easy-read and child- friendly versions. UN and regional recommendations tend to be quite generic and are only issued in the official languages of these processes. It is your State's responsibility to translate UN and regional documents into national language(s) and easy-read versions and disseminate them to the general public so they are accessible for people from diverse backgrounds and level of ability. In some countries, the National Human Rights Institution may also do this.

When the State fails to do this and in order to disseminate the recommendations, you may need to:

- Simplify the way the recommendations are written where needed, to make them easier to understand.
- Translate them into child-friendly language, taking into account different age ranges and abilities. Working directly with different groups of children, including the most affected by discrimination and/or exclusion will be useful to shape child-friendly versions that are accessible to those children.
 - [How to write child friendly documents](#)
 - Example of [child-friendly concluding observations](#) (United Kingdom)

Disseminate the recommendations

Share them and talk about them:

- To the media and general public (awareness raising campaigns, press-releases, social media, etc.). Try to use different types of media to reach a broad audience (e.g. visual, audio, pictures, text, Braille, etc.),
- To children, and support them to share information about UN and regional recommendations and follow-up with their peers,
- To government officials, members of the parliament, national human rights institution/ombudspersons and other decision-makers at national, local and community levels,
- To foreign embassies,
- To colleagues, civil society partners and professionals working with and for children,
- To relevant professionals (trade unions, universities, religious groups, judges, lawyers, law-enforcement officers and law students, social workers, ...),
- To donors.

Check [Annex 3: Stakeholder Analysis](#) for suggestions on additional stakeholders to inform and why.

Provide capacity building

Where necessary, and if resources permit, talk about, share, and ensure capacity building and training on the concluding observations and/or UPR recommendations, to colleagues,

partners, children, media and others about UN and regional recommendations focussing on what they are, where they come from, how they apply to your country, how they can improve the situation of children's rights in your country, what the State is meant to do and how civil society in general has a responsibility to monitor State's implementation, etc. Some organisations organise, sometimes in collaboration with UN agencies, specific capacity building sessions on recommendations also with Members of Parliament, public servants, etc.

UN and regional recommendations can also be used to enrich capacity building and human rights education programmes for both children and adults because they bring actionable information and help them see what human rights implementation means in practice.

TIP: When you communicate to colleagues, working partners and/or coalition members, make sure to include the highest decision-making levels of these organisations to try to secure their interest and commitment to follow-up. This will greatly help achieving the next steps of the process (a lesson shared by the child rights coalition in Senegal).

Use the recommendations in ongoing communications

- You may want to formulate key messages about the existence of the recommendations related to child rights; you may even want to use content from the thematic recommendations to update your messages or information you prepare about a specific child rights issue (speeches, media messages, publications, campaign material, social media, etc.).
- Make sure your communications colleagues are aware of the content of the recommendations and the status of their implementation.
- Make systematic reference to UN and regional child rights recommendations in research and publications, as they give good evidence of the state commitments and status of realisation of children's rights in a country.

Step 3: Design an advocacy plan and advocate

Advocacy is about holding the State to account. It is therefore important to analyse what the State's responsibilities are in the implementation of the recommendations, before defining what you can do to encourage and support the process directly (through contribution to implementation) or indirectly (through advocacy).

Tip: Be both a watchdog and an implementing partner! Don't forget that the State is responsible for implementing the recommendations it has received, not you.

Tip: Most organisations already have an advocacy plan or strategy for all prioritised issues or on specific issues (for example on child marriage), in which case this step would mainly be to inform and complement that plan.

Analyse State responsibilities: What steps are required by the State for each recommendation to become a reality?

- What types of action (e.g. policy, legislative, judiciary, institutional, educational, awareness-raising and other measures) are required by the State to achieve what is expected in the selected recommendations? Translate the recommendations into action-oriented steps, including the different milestones that will need to be achieved in order for the recommendation to be implemented effectively and equitably. This might mean that specific measures need to be taken to make sure women and children, particularly those most impacted by inequality and discrimination including those without citizenship, can benefit from the recommendation.

TIP: If you are unsure of the meaning or extent of the State's obligation with regard to certain rights, check if the process issuing the recommendation (UN or regional treaty body or UPR working group) has already developed an interpretation of this right or obligation in general comments, jurisprudence, legal opinions, etc. The easiest way to search this is to go to the webpage of the UN or regional human rights monitoring and review processes.

For example, you will find the list of UNCRC General Comments [here](#). Among these you will find for instance a [General Comment #12 on the right to be heard](#), and a General Comment [#25 on Child rights in the digital environment](#).

- Which authority is responsible for these actions? Who can decide? Is the decision taken at municipal, local, federal/sub-national or national level? Is there coordination between ministries working on similar recommendations coming from different monitoring and review processes?
- Is there a government action-plan or framework to build on?
- To what extent are public servants aware of the recommendations?

Government follow-up framework in Ivory Coast

In Ivory Coast, civil society organisations influenced the development of a government framework for a coordinated follow-up to UN/regional recommendations received by the government on children's rights.

Analyse who are the key targets, facilitators, allies or opponents for your advocacy actions:

- Which colleagues/partners need to be informed and can contribute to the success of this work? You will also need to identify who will be responsible for the follow-up advocacy work within your organisation. This person should have a good understanding of State's international and regional child rights obligations and their implications.
- Who are the influencers and allies? Who can help you achieve the action identified to implement the recommendation (e.g. civil society actors, community groups, children's structures, government authorities, parliamentarians, parliamentary commissions, political figures, NHRI, municipal assemblies, etc...)? As much as possible, identify long-term partners, including organisations led by affected people.
- In contexts where civic space is limited, who is best placed to influence progress on the implementation?
- Who are potential opponents and blockers?

[Check the full list of relevant stakeholders for follow-up activities.](#)

Design your advocacy plan with advocacy activities and a timeframe.

There are many occasions to trigger dialogue and call for action for implementation of recommendations and a variety of activities that can be taken. An advocacy strategy and plan are very useful, both for short term and long-term planning.

Advocacy activities may include, but are not limited to:

- Identifying advocacy and campaign opportunities, taking into account the timeline for implementation of the UN and regional recommendations you have selected. Follow-up advocacy opportunities often come when new UN or regional recommendations are made to your State on issues of relevance to children and their rights, such as the adoption of concluding observations from the UNCRC Committee or recommendations from the UPR working group. It is often then that State representatives and the media may be most alert and willing to discuss the recommendations coming from that specific process.
- Key dates and events that matter for your country and your government can also be moments to call for action (anniversaries, elections, parliamentary sessions,

national, regional or international recognised days such the International Day of the Girl Child on 11th October, Day of the African Child on 16th June, parliamentary sessions, etc.)

- Formulate new or update existing advocacy plan and strategy, policy briefs and advocacy asks: update content of advocacy messages or asks, position or policy papers taking into account what is in the UN or regional recommendations you have selected. Add new advocacy targets based on these recommendations.
- Have a dialogue with State authorities (relevant ministries, government departments) that you will engage in following up the implementation of UN and regional recommendations and ask them about their implementations plans and possible areas of collaboration (eg: participate in consultations, workshops or help draft a national plan). You can meet to discuss and ask questions or you can *issue letters to the Prime Minister and different ministries of your country to draw their attention to specific UN and regional recommendations and potential partnerships and follow-up to get a response.*
- Urge your State to have plans to consult with civil society and children during the implementation process and/or organise regular meetings and roundtables with government authorities (national and local) to share concrete recommendations and implementation proposals.
- If you are planning a long-term collaboration, such as signing a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with a ministry on a specific issue, you have an opportunity to frame this collaboration as a means to implement certain UN and regional recommendations of relevance to that ministry. For example, if the MoU is about a right to health project, then it can be relevant to refer to the UN and regional recommendations on the issue.
- Reach out to the National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) such as the Human Rights Commission or Ombudsman's office, if there is one, to know about its follow-up plans.

In Kenya, the civil society coalition for the UPR established a unique partnership with the NHRI and they produced together a monitoring tool for recommendations and joint proposals on how the recommendations could be implemented.

(Accounting for Human Rights Protection Under the UPR: [The Difference Kenya's Stakeholders Made. KNCHR](#), September 2011)

- Reach out to parliamentarians individually or set up an informal group of parliamentarians supporting the follow-up of these UN/regional recommendations.

- Communicate your advocacy activities and content with the media (foster media champions of your issues).
- Reach out to lawyers from the private and public sector as well as in law schools and clinics to discuss how these recommendations can be useful tools in child rights litigation, including strategic litigation. Organisations in Belgium⁴ have, for example, developed a [tool for lawyers](#) on how to use the CRC Concluding observations in their work.
- Contact foreign embassies (e.g. institutional donors or States which have made some of the UN recommendations you want to follow up) and UN agencies to discuss how they could support the implementation status.
- If the UN and regional recommendation(s) you are following up originate(s) from an expert body (UN treaty body or regional body), invite a representative of that body/mechanism to visit your country, meet parliamentarians, government representatives, the NHRI/ ombudsperson, children, etc. and use this opportunity to reinforce media attention and advocacy actions.
- We encourage you to include activities with children, especially when they have been involved in the reporting process to CRC, UPR or other mechanism, to:
 - Shape their own advocacy messages about the recommendations.
 - Engage with the media and hold meetings or events with decision-makers in government, local authorities, parliamentarians and national human rights commissions.
 - Deliver child friendly outreach sessions on UN and regional recommendations in schools, youth clubs, children's homes and other institutions to raise awareness.

More information on children's participation in the UN follow-up process can be found in Child Rights Connect's [Guide for non-governmental organisations accompanying children in CRC reporting](#)

⁴ La Coordination des ONG pour les droits de l'enfant (CODE), in collaboration with Defence for Children International-Belgium.

STEP 4: Monitor the implementation of UN and regional recommendations on a regular and continuous basis

Three advocacy messages to strengthen the implementation of UN and regional recommendations

Consider the following when you engage in follow-up advocacy activities:

1. **Urge your State to establish a regular and formal dialogue with civil society actors working on a variety of issues, including women's and disability rights organisations etc. and children** (e.g. through consultation meetings, roundtables with local and national authorities) to share concrete recommendations and implementation proposals.
2. **Urge your State to prepare a substantial and inclusive plan to implement the UN and regional recommendations received**, including goals, objectives, programmatic activities, expected results, identified responsible institutions (State agencies/departments), necessary resources, monitoring entities, supporting entities (such as UN agencies and others) and clear timeframes for regular and mid-term monitoring of progress, as well as an implementation tracking tool using indicators. Make sure that monitoring and reporting looks at equity to ensure that all relevant sectors of a society are benefitting from implementation not just the wealthiest or easiest to reach.

An easy way for your State to do so would be to set up a National Mechanism for Reporting and Follow up (NMRF) if it hasn't done so yet.

3. **Encourage your State (and NHRI if there is one) to set up a national database on UN and regional recommendations** or any other form of information management system. Such system should be flexible enough to incorporate new recommendations and be regularly updated and be publicly accessible to foster transparency, accountability and participation. Some countries (eg. Ecuador, Mexico, [Paraguay](#), Portugal, Samoa or Uganda) have created their own public national database with all the UN recommendations they have received. Others have created information-gathering tools (E.g. Afghanistan, India and Kenya).

Monitor progress in implementation

- Identify the indicators (and data) that would pave the way for implementation of each recommendation, including measures of equitable progress to ensure that implementation closes gaps amongst different groups of children instead of increasing them.
- Track the status of implementation of each recommendation:

- Set up regular meetings during which you, together with colleagues, other civil society organisations and children or other stakeholders such as NHRI or UN agencies, assess the status of implementation and identify actions that should be taken to accelerate progress. These should take place per quarter or annually, but they should also be informed by the deadlines the State has for the next reporting opportunity, follow-up reports or mid-term reporting under the UPR. You can find more information about finding deadlines [here](#), and fill in this information in your own *recommendations' tracking matrix*.
- You need to regularly check whether new UN recommendations have been issued to your State and update the matrix accordingly. You can find them on your country page of www.ohchr.org.
- You can conduct your own tracking or contribute to a broader national tracking system (by the State such as [NMRF](#) or NHRI), if there is one.
- Data collection is best done jointly. Organisations have done so using regular surveys with children such as [Young Voices](#), annual follow-up meetings joining State, civil society and other stakeholders, developing annual reports on status of implementation of the recommendations, etc.

TIP: Make sure you collect data that is disaggregated by sex, age and disability as a minimum.

How to develop a web-based monitoring tool

India's Human Rights Working Group, a national coalition of 14 human rights organizations and independent experts, created a web-based monitoring tool using the UPR recommendations, but with the intention of creating a broader tracking mechanism for all international and national recommendations. The tool clusters and summarizes the recommendations, links them to other national and international recommendations, proposes implementation indicators, identifies responsible State institutions, and provides updates on budgetary, legislative, policy, and judicial measures taken by the State.⁵

⁵ See the study of the United Nations Development Group (UNDG) "[UN country team support to tracking the follow-up of human rights recommendations, 2017](#)", p. 14

Document your own success and challenges

Sharing and disseminating lessons learned and good practices on follow-up actions will help you improve and can inspire others to get engaged, replicate and adapt your experiences to their own context and priorities. Throughout the follow up process, make sure you document: 1) Steps undertaken, with whom (internal colleagues and external partners) and why, 2) Challenges faced, 3) Indicators of success,⁵ and 4) Financial and technical implications.

You can use How to Child rights case-study and concept note templates. [Contact the How to Child Rights team for more information and support.](#)

Other examples of follow-up work done by civil society has been documented by Child Rights Connect and can be found [here](#).

Report back to the UN on the progress made by your State

Each UN and regional monitoring and review process offers the possibility for CSOs and children to provide information to inform the review process. If you regularly update your Recommendations' tracking matrix, you will have reliable information about the status of children's rights in your country ready to use when the next reporting opportunity comes!

- More information about the reporting process and how to [engage with UN human rights system](#), about the reporting process and how to engage on child rights under the [African human rights system](#) (implementation of [ACRWC](#), [ACHPR](#) and [Maputo Protocol](#)) and the reporting process under the [European Committee of Social Rights](#) (the [European Social Charter](#)).
- For information on how to access UN monitoring and review processes and send them your information, contact the NGOs listed at the end of [Annex 3: Stakeholder Analysis](#).

We also encourage you to refer to concluding observations and UPR recommendations as you engage in other forms of monitoring and review processes, such as that of [UN Special Procedures](#) or as you engage in the UN Sustainable Goals monitoring process, ie the [Voluntary National Reviews](#).

Annexes and useful resources

⁵ There are a number of progress markers that you can monitor and document as indicators of success, such as: the government inviting CSOs and children to discuss implementation progress; national and local government reflecting change in attitude and political will to address the recommendations; CSOs regularly meeting and coordinating action; having children themselves involved in the follow-up and in analysing actual results for children on the ground, etc.

[Annex 1: What are UN and regional human rights monitoring and review processes.](#)

[Annex 2: How to find UN and regional recommendations?](#)

[Annex 3: Table: Stakeholder Analysis: Who should be involved in follow-up and why?](#)

[Annex 4: Follow-up activity plan planning and tracking -Downloadable format](#)

[Annex 5: Recommendations' tracking matrix template - Downloadable format](#)

[Annex 6: Example of a Recommendations' tracking matrix- the case of country X tracking recommendations on Corporal punishment](#)

[Annex 7: References and additional resources](#)

[List of Definitions](#)

[List of abbreviations](#)

Contact and document details

If you want to know more or provide feedback, please contact: howtochildrights@rb.se

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