

# THE UPR & ME

My Guide to  
Participating in the UPR

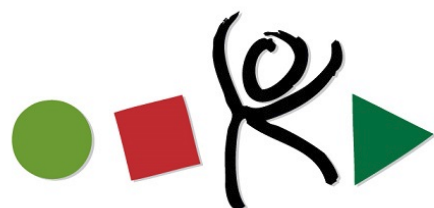


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UPR Info is a non-profit, non-governmental organisation. It aims at promoting human rights through the Universal Periodic Review. To this end, UPR Info supports the engagement of all stakeholders, such as UN Member States, Parliamentarians, National Human Rights Institutions, civil society organisations, media, and academics, in the UPR process.

Child Rights Connect is an independent, non-profit organisation founded in 1983 as the Ad Hoc Group for the drafting of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Through its more than 90 member organisations, it has a worldwide reach that allows children's rights defenders, including children, to speak with one global voice.

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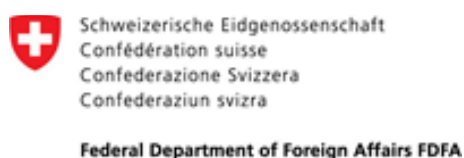
THANK YOU ALL!

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# WHAT IS IN THIS GUIDE?

INTRODUCING YOUR GUIDE TO THE UPR Page 5

THE BASICS Page 8

- \* What are Human Rights?
- \* What are the “United Nations” (UN)?
- \* What is the “Human Rights Council” (HRC)?

THE UPR Page 11

- \* What is it?
- \* Who is involved?
- \* What happens?

HOW CAN I PARTICIPATE Page 15

- \* ...Before the review?
- \* ...During the review?
- \* ...After the review?

FURTHER SUPPORT Page 36



Be careful! This document uses some examples of violence against children on pages 26-27 and 38-39. You don't need to read these if they make you feel uncomfortable or unhappy. Remember to speak to someone you trust about upsetting issues if you would like to.



# INTRODUCING YOUR GUIDE TO THE UPR

*The UPR is a mechanism the UN uses to improve everybody's human rights. In the UPR, the overall human rights situation of everyone living in every country in the world is examined by every other country! As a result, countries commit to improve the human rights situation for every single child and adult.*

*It is an opportunity for children and adults to participate, including those in diverse groups and those in more vulnerable situations who may otherwise not have their voice heard. As we will be finding out, civil society organisations, including human and child rights defenders like you, have a very important role to play in the UPR and are key to its success!*

*This Guide will help you learn more about the UPR and how you can be part of it to improve the human rights situation in your country. It has been developed for all children aged between the ages of 12-17. It can also be used by anyone else who would like to participate in the UPR, including younger children. Many thanks to the 142 children and young people in Africa, North and South America, Europe, Asia, Central America, and the Pacific who have been part of its development!*

*"Explaining the UPR process informs a larger group of children about this important process and how it could directly impact their lives for the better"*

Boy aged between 15-17,  
Albania

# ABBREVIATIONS

**CSO(s)** Civil Society Organisation(s)

**HRC** Human Rights Council

**NGO(s)** Non-Governmental Organisation(s)

**NHRI(s)** National Human Rights Institution(s)

**OHCHR** Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights

**S.M.A.R.T** Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-Bound

**SUR** State Under Review

**UPR** Universal Periodic Review

**UN** United Nations

**UNCRC** United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child





## SOME WORDS TO KNOW...

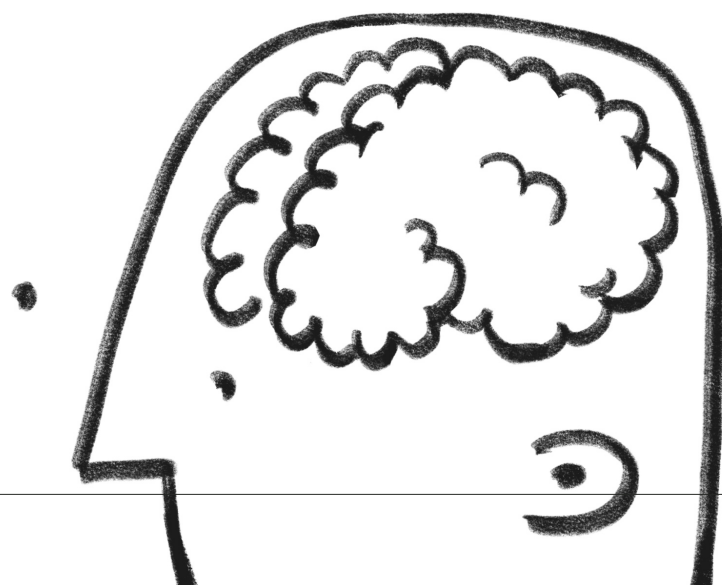
**Advocacy:** telling people about something that is important to you and persuading them to take action to make a positive change. This might include adopting a law to end child marriage, or spending money to build a school.

**Consulting:** finding out about other people's opinions on issues that they know about or have experienced.

**Implementation:** to put a plan or commitment into practice. For example, to implement a recommendation to make schools more accessible to children who use wheelchairs, decision-makers will need to organise construction work at several schools in the country.

**Lobbying:** trying to persuade a decision-maker (e.g. government officials) to change actions, policies, or decisions that are needed to improve people's lives.

**Monitoring:** to follow and record the progress of something to see how successful or unsuccessful it is, or to check if something is being done properly.





# THE BASICS

## What are human rights?

Human rights are things you are allowed to be, to do or to have because you are human. Everybody has the right to life, the right to food and shelter, the right to work, the right to education, and the right to freedom of expression. You can read the full list of rights and fundamental freedoms that everyone has [here](#).

Human rights...

- Belong to everyone, no matter who you are or where you are.
- Cannot be taken away from anyone at any time.
- Are equally important.
- Are a responsibility we all share to respect each other, to help each other and to protect those in need.



Some groups of people need extra protection because of who they are or the situation they are in. These people have extra rights, which are written down in UN documents called **human rights instruments**. There are extra rights for people with disabilities, women, and children, for example.

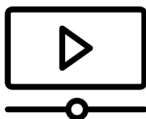
Children have extra rights because of the special protection and care they need from birth until they become adults at the age of 18. Children's rights are written down in the **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)**.

Unfortunately, children and adults are not always able to claim their rights, even though laws might be in place to protect them. For example, every day millions of children around the world are affected by violence; are not able to get the medical treatment they need; or are forbidden to speak out about things that are important to them. Many others are treated unequally, or discriminated against, every day just because of who they are. In many parts of the world, for example, girls are not allowed to go to school just because they are girls.



Don't forget to find out about inequalities and challenge practices that stand in the way of equality for everyone! In particular, it is important to take gender equality into account in every moment of our thinking and what we do.

Governments have the biggest responsibility to make sure that everyone, including children, can enjoy all their rights. When human rights violations happen, it is the government's job to make positive changes so that the situation improves for everyone.



Watch these films to find out more about:

**Human rights** and **Children's rights**

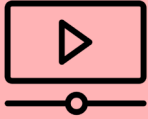
[Watch here](#)

[Watch here](#)

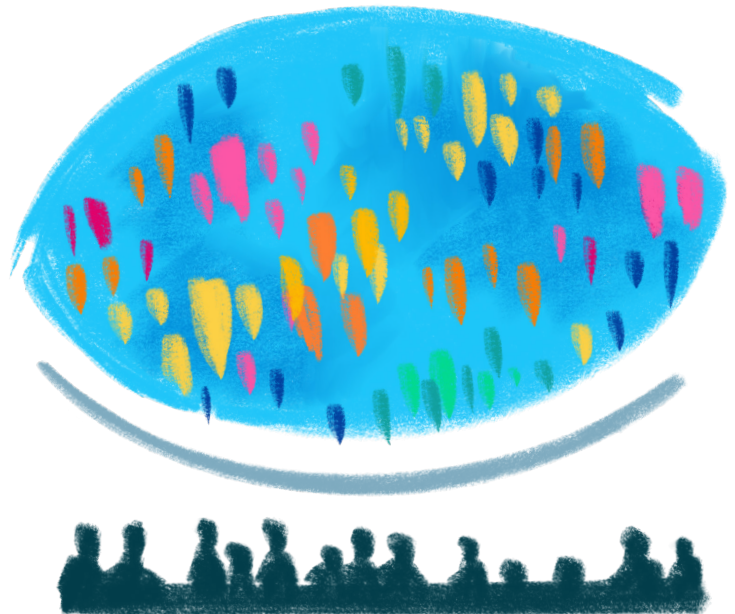
[Watch here](#)

## What is the United Nations (UN)?

The United Nations is an international organisation that was created in 1945. It is currently made up of 193 countries (also known as UN Member States) who work together to improve the world for everyone. Protecting human rights is one of their main responsibilities.

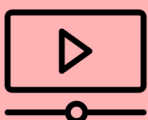


Watch **this film** to learn more about the UN.



## What is the Human Rights Council (HRC)?

The HRC is a group of 47 countries responsible for the promotion and protection of all human rights. It comes together to discuss how to respond to human rights abuses around the world, including situations of urgent concern.



Watch **this film** to learn more about the HRC.



# UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW (UPR)

## What is it?

The UPR is the process the Human Rights Council uses to monitor and improve the human rights situation in every country around the world. This includes children's rights.

### UNIVERSAL

Because all States are reviewed, and all human rights are addressed.

### The UPR is...

#### a REVIEW

Because 42 States are reviewed every year.

### PERIODIC

Because each State is reviewed every 4 and a half years.



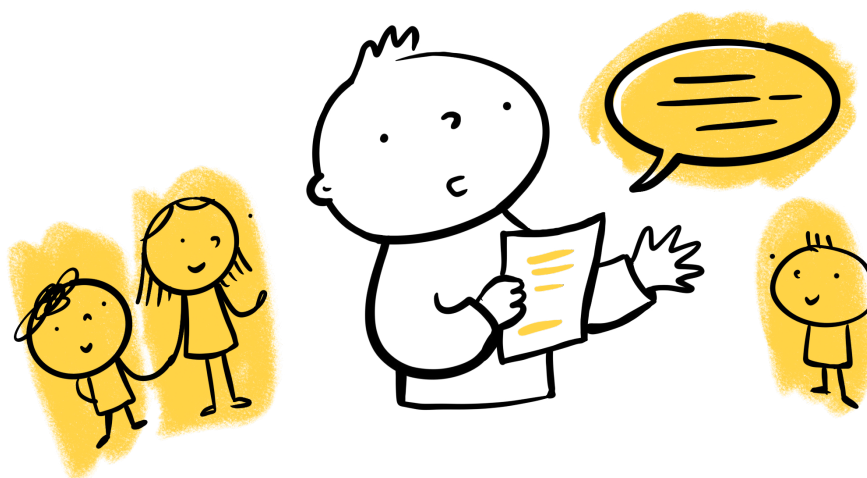
The UPR meetings take place every year in Geneva, Switzerland, during January, May and October.

## Who is involved?

**States:** All 193 Member States of the UN are reviewed during the UPR. The State whose human rights situation is being examined in the UPR is called the **'State Under Review' (SUR)**. Other States make recommendations about how to improve the human rights situation in the State Under Review- they are known as **'Recommending States'**.

**Civil Society:** Civil society represents people's different interests, not necessarily the interests of the government. It includes civil society organisations (CSOs) and non-governmental organisations (NGOs), who should be able to support citizens at national or community levels, to speak out about issues of concern to them. Civil society has a central role in the UPR process, providing independent information about the State Under Review, raising awareness on human rights issues, and monitoring the State's progress in improving the human rights situation in its country.

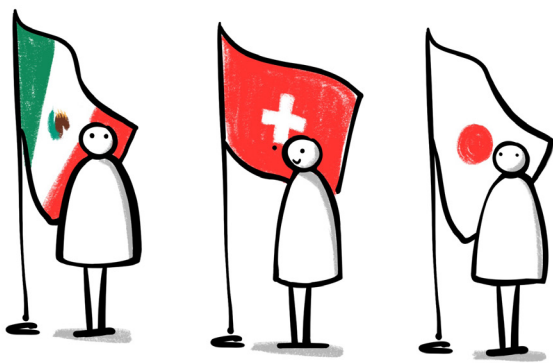
**Children, children's groups and organisations** are a very important part of civil society. It is not only your right to speak out about issues of concern to you, but you can positively influence decision-making in your country and improve the lives of thousands of other children (and adults). You can do this with or without adults- sometimes you might want to add to adult discussions and other times you might prefer to discuss your issues with other children in a children's group or organisation.



For example, in 2020, a group of children’s organisations called Consortium Nepal organised discussions with children in different parts of Nepal, to learn about the UPR and support children to discuss the topics and issues that are important to them. They did this in lots of ways, including with poems, song, drama, stories, letters, quizzes and pictures! They then held a national consultation in Nepal’s capital city, Kathmandu, where child representatives shared the key topics and issues that they discussed. A group of children then volunteered to write-up the results and create a report which was submitted to the UPR.

**National Human Rights Institution (NHRI):** An NHRI (sometimes called a national human rights commission, council, or ombudsman office) is an independent group with responsibility to protect, monitor and promote human rights in a given country. Not every country has an NHRI. Some countries have a National Children Commissioner in charge of protecting child rights.

**Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR):** OHCHR is the UN agency specialised in the promotion and protection of all human rights. It organises the UPR.



**Diplomats:** Diplomats (sometimes called Permanent Missions, Embassies, or Government/State Representatives) are people who represent their country in other countries. They can have a powerful role influencing decisions in your country too! Geneva Diplomats represent their country at UN meetings in Geneva, including the UPR.

**Permanent Missions:** Permanent Missions are a group of people who represent their country at the United Nations. They can have a powerful role in influencing decisions in your country.

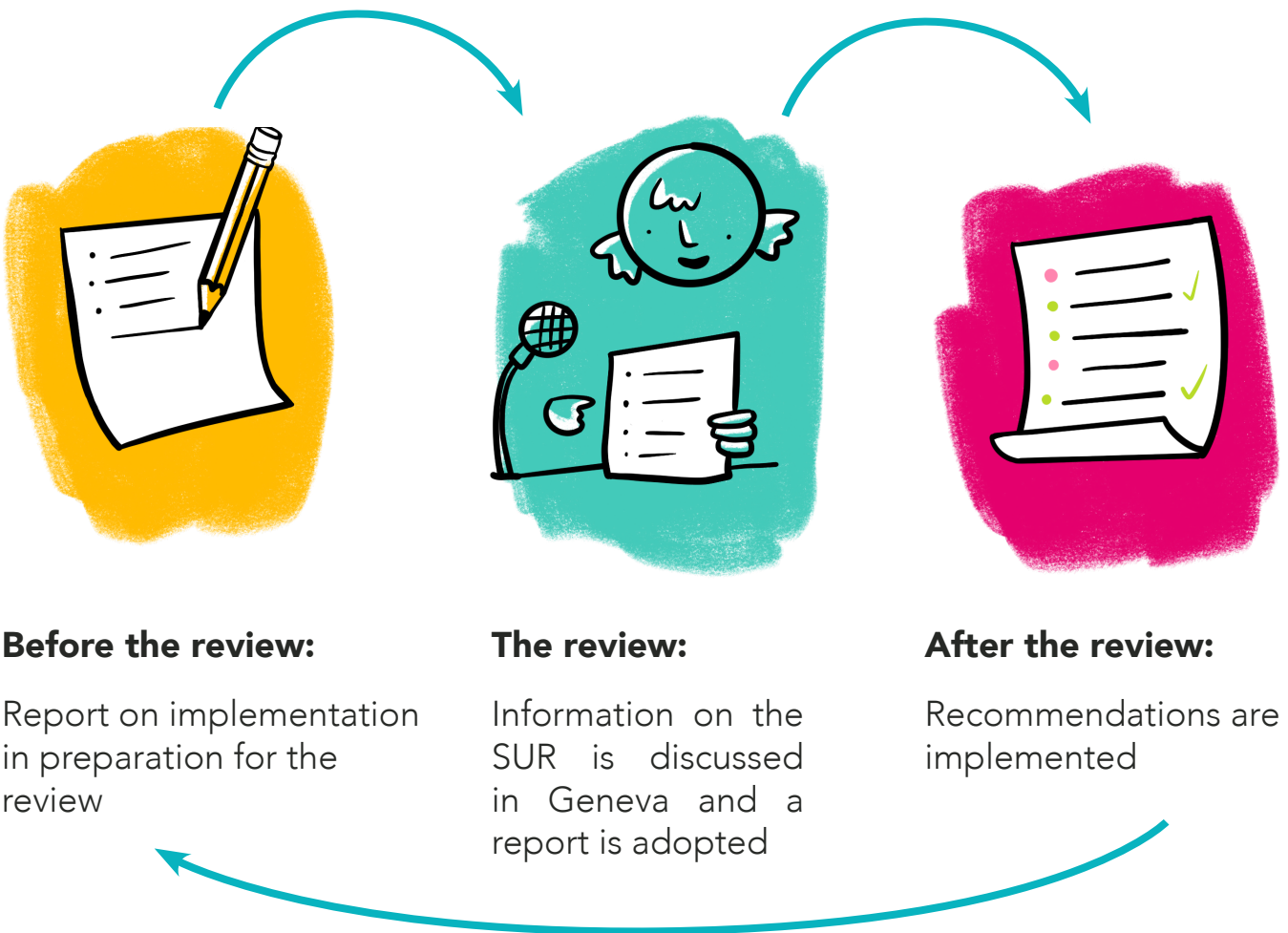
**Stakeholder:** A stakeholder is any person or organisation that is involved in a project or a process, like the UPR. You are a stakeholder!



## What happens?

Every 4 ½ years, each State tells other States about the human rights situation in its country. A 'review' meeting takes place where a group of States considers the information on the 'State Under Review', taking into account information from the State itself, as well as information from civil society. Recommending States then present the State Under Review with recommendations to improve human rights for all its people.

### The UPR process takes places in 3 key stages:



When is your country's next UPR Review? Where is it in the cycle now? Find out by searching for your country on the [UPR Info website!](#)

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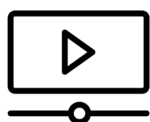
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# HOW CAN I PARTICIPATE?

Children (and adults) can contribute to improving the human rights situation in their country at every stage of the UPR, by:

-  Reporting on and raising awareness about the human rights situation in their community and making recommendations to improve its human rights situation.
-  Monitoring the positive (or negative) changes in human rights.
-  Organising or participating in events that can contribute to improving the human rights situation.

 Don't forget! It is your right to be heard and to influence all decisions which affect you!



In **this film**, children from Albania share their views about why you should participate in the UPR.

Let's look at what happens at each stage of the UPR process and how you can be involved...

## How can I participate before the review?



You (and other stakeholders) have a very important role before a country's UPR review takes place to tell others about any positive and negative changes in the human rights in your country! This is the time when other States need accurate information to learn about what is happening in the State Under Review. This information will help them make clear recommendations to the State Under Review about what it needs to do to improve its human rights situation.

Let's look in more detail at how you can participate!

## How you can participate 1 year before the Review



Discuss the human rights situation in your country with other children, young people and adults, listening to how their biggest human rights issues affect them.



Select one human rights issue that you want to focus on, and begin to write down what people have told you about that issue.





Participate in meetings with children and adults in your community, region or national level to make sure that your views are heard. These could be meetings that your government is organising, or meetings that anyone can arrange (including children!). They might be meetings in person, or online!



Raise awareness by organising or joining an existing campaign to tell the general public and the media all about the UPR and the issue you have selected to speak out on.

Can you think of any issues affecting children (or adults) in your country that you would like to change?

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To find out more about these issues, who else would you like to speak to?

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Don't forget to ask children who might not usually be part of influencing decisions affecting them. This might include children living in remote areas or children with disabilities.

## How you can participate 6 to 10 months before the Review

→ Use the notes you made in your consultations with others, to write a 'shadow' report. You might be able to contribute to a report that is already being written by a civil society organisation, or you can also write your own report with other children.

If you are working with a civil society organisation, you will only be able to submit one individual report per organisation, but you can contribute to as many joint reports with others as you like.

→ This report should always include:

- How this issue has improved since the last UPR Review (or how it has got worse).
- New relevant issues that you are concerned about.
- Recommendations to improve this issue- Recommending States might use your recommendations! (see below for guidance on developing recommendations).

Find out when your country's shadow reports are due by searching for your country on the **OHCHR UPR webpage**, 8-10 months before the UPR Review.

When you are happy with your report, you can upload it on the OHCHR website. UPR Info can help you do this.



Tip! Keep your report short and direct! If you are sending a single report, you can use up to 2815 words to make your key points. Joint reports can use up to 5630 words.



# UPR RECOMMENDATIONS

To participate in the UPR, you need to have clear recommendations that your government could use to improve the human rights situation in your country. Recommendations are really important because States use these in discussions with other States. Before we go further, let's look at UPR Recommendations in more detail...

Experience has found that:

- A State cannot implement recommendations that are not clear or it does not understand
- Detailed recommendations clearly explain what the State should do
- Specific recommendations are easier to monitor

Each recommendation should only address one issue with one specific action that the State should take. To write precise and effective recommendations, make sure they are Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound, or SMART! This helps to identify the human rights problem and recommend what the State needs to do to make it better.

Ask these questions to help make your recommendations SMART:

**S**

**Specific:** Does your recommendation refer to a specific human right and require a specific action?

**M**

**Measurable:** Can we measure progress in implementing your recommendation?

**A**

**Achievable:** Does the State have what it needs to meet your recommendation on time?

**R**

**Relevant:** If it is implemented, will your recommendation improve the human rights situation in your country?

**T**

**Time-bound:** Does your recommendation say when you expect the State to implement it? All recommendations should be implemented by the next review, but shorter deadlines can be suggested.

If you can answer **YES** to all of these questions, then you have drafted a **SMART** recommendation.

**Here are some examples of UPR recommendations:**



A recommendation from Chile to Bahrain:  
"Adopt a national policy on children with disabilities".



A recommendation from Hungary to Chad:  
"Allocate at least 25 per cent of the national budget for education and eliminate all discretionary fees in order to ensure free primary education for all children".



Do you think the recommendations above are SMART? Why? Why not?

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Write a recommendation you would like to make to your country:

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## How you can participate 2 to 4 months before the Review

It is now time to tell everyone about your issue including the recommendations that you made. You can do this by writing or speaking to people, including foreign diplomats working in your country or at the UN in Geneva.



- Prepare a summary of your report in an advocacy factsheet.
- Contact Diplomats that are engaged on the issue you are interested in. You can contact them by email, or telephone at that country's embassy in your country. Make sure you send them copies of your factsheet- it will help them to address your issue at your country's UPR and use your recommendations!

See the next page for more information on factsheets.

Find out which States have made recommendations on your issue by clicking on **this link** and entering your issue in the search box.

Click on **this link** to find the foreign embassies in your country, including their contact information.



- If it is possible, and you have permission and support from adults, visit the foreign embassies in your country to convince Recommending States to address your issues of concern when they speak to your State at the Review of your country.
- Contact Geneva Diplomats at least 3 months before the Review to persuade them to use your recommendations!



Tip! Find a list of Geneva Diplomats **here**



→ Speak directly to Diplomats in your country about your human rights issue(s) of concern at your country's in-country Pre-session meeting.

We're about to find out more about what this is and what you can do!

Who are some of the Diplomats in your country?  
What issues are they interested in?

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## FACTSHEETS

A factsheet presents key information. Diplomats do not have a lot of time, but they can read a factsheet very quickly to learn about your urgent key messages. Hopefully, your factsheet will persuade Diplomats to speak out on your issue and use your recommendations. They are a must-have for your advocacy! Your factsheet should clearly highlight:

1. a summary of key issues from your country's last UPR
2. progress the government has made on your issue
3. remaining challenges and impacts
4. recommendations for further action

At the end of this Guide you will find:

- A template to draft a simple factsheet
- An example of a factsheet prepared by the Civil Society Collective on the situation of the Rights of Children in Sri Lanka.



Tip! Make sure you have printed enough copies of your factsheet to use as an advocacy tool that you can share with Diplomats in your country or in Geneva! You can share your factsheet by email if you can't meet the Diplomat in person.

## What is an in-country Pre-Session?

In these meetings, up to 12 representatives from civil society organisations speak to representatives from embassies that are based in your country. Panel members present the progress that has been made since the last UPR Review, the challenges remaining on a chosen thematic issue and suggest further recommendations to improve the human rights situation in your country. These meetings are held in your country's capital city, two months before the Review.

Pre-session meetings are very important opportunities for civil society representatives, including you, to speak directly to the Recommending States on the human rights situation in your country and suggest recommendations that Recommending States can make to your country at the Review.

We will learn more about how to participate in Pre-sessions in Geneva on the next page.

'I want more children to participate in the UPR- like a 'World Assembly of Children'. This way, everyone will be able to say what is happening in their country and share their experiences so that more people know.'

Girl, aged between 12-14,  
Côte d'Ivoire

## How you can participate 1 month before the Review?

Participate in your country's Geneva Pre-session!

### What is a Geneva Pre-Session?

A Geneva Pre-session is similar to an in-country Pre-session meeting but it only has 6 speakers, and it takes place in Geneva, Switzerland! These meetings are organized by UPR Info.

Many more Pre-sessions take place in Geneva than in-country but you can take part in a Geneva Pre-session from your own country by applying to speak at the Pre-session on UPR Info's website. To take part in a Pre-session taking place in Geneva you will need to be able to travel all the way to Geneva. If the Pre-session is being organized online, you will be able to participate from your own country via an online video link! Check with UPR Info to find out more.

## How to apply to participate in a Geneva Pre-Session

To speak at this important meeting (either remotely or in person) you need to send an online application to UPR Info who select who can speak on the panel. If you are chosen, you will join other people from national and international civil society organisations, as well as National Human Rights Institutions, who will explain the human rights situation in your country to Geneva Diplomats working with the United Nations. Participants will also suggest recommendations that Geneva Diplomats can use at your country's actual UPR Review.

### This is what happens in the meeting:



“Each Pre-session is country-specific and lasts for an hour.”

### The panelists or speakers

There are 5 to 6 speakers per Pre-Session. Each speaker has between 5 to 7 minutes to make its presentation.

### The UPR Info moderator

Introduces the State's UPR record and gives the floor to civil society speakers.

### The audience

The Pre-sessions are public, although Diplomats are the most important participants because they are the people who will make the recommendations to your State at its actual UPR Review.

## ...You can participate by

- Giving key information on the human rights situation of your country
- Presenting examples of recommendations that States can make to your country during the actual review

## ...How you can prepare for the Pre-Session

- Participate in a free online UPR Info training session which will help you find out more about the Pre-Session meeting and the skills you will need to persuade diplomats to use your recommendations at your country's UPR Review. Contact UPR Info about the dates of the next training, and any other questions you have about the UPR. You will find their contact details on page 36.
- Prepare a 5 minute visual presentation which you can present during the Pre-Session meeting.

## ...This statement should include:

1. Information about your organisation (or the group of organisations) that you are representing, including if your organisation has been active in:
  - the UPR process
  - other human rights mechanisms (e.g. the Committee on the Rights of the Child), or
  - any national consultations organised by your State
2. A short introduction explaining the number of issues you will raise and in which order
3. Your priority issues! You should follow these steps for each issue that you are raising, below:



## Step 1

Use UPR Info's database to find all the recommendations that your country has received on your issue. Make sure you record all of these and don't forget to note which countries made those recommendations!

**Example:** During Albania's second UPR, it received 57 recommendations on child rights, 34 of which were about violence against children and child trafficking. Countries who made those recommendations on child rights were from all regions of the world.

## Step 2

Describe how the situation on your issue has evolved in the country since the last review.

What have been recent achievements and what are the remaining gaps? Has there been any evolution on my issue since the last review?

**Example:** A large study on violence against children in Albania (2013) found that:

- 69% of children were victims of psychological abuse
- 59% of physical violence
- 11% of sexual abuse

There is a lack of online protection measures, exposing children to bullying, violence, and exploitation. More than 200 cases of online child abuse were reported between 2016-2018. There is a significant lack of data on children trafficking. Reports estimate that over 5000 children were victims of trafficking and smuggling. Children experience sex trafficking and forced labour in Albania, especially during tourist season. Although violence against children and trafficking are against the law, few legal actions have been taken to report those responsible for these crimes or provide remedies to children.

Source: Pre-session's statement of Children's Human Rights Centre of Albania in 2019.



### Step 3

Suggest 2 or 3 specific recommendations and 2 or 3 advance questions that you would like Recommending States to make to your country. Which recommendations would I like to make to my country? Which questions would I like to ask?

#### **Example:**

1. Take legal actions to report the perpetrators of violence against children and trafficking of children.
2. Provide remedies to children victims of violence and/or trafficking.
3. Develop a National Action Plan for the Elimination of Violence in Schools.



Tip! Make sure your presentation is short, clear, precise and eye-catching so that Diplomats attending the meetings can remember your important recommendations. You will only have 5 to 7 minutes to convince them!



Tip! Practice your presentation to make sure that it does not take longer than 7 minutes. Remember to speak clearly so that everyone in the meeting will be able to hear you! Now is the time to make any last minute changes to what you want to say.



## How you can participate in the Geneva Pre-Session meeting

When you're in the Pre-Session meeting, the moderator will ask people on the panel to give their presentations, including you! After everyone has finished presenting, Geneva Diplomats might ask you some questions about your issue.

**Click here** to see UPR Info's animation about what happens at the Geneva Pre-session and how you can participate online. Although the film refers to Pre-session 36, which took place in October 2020, it is still relevant for other Geneva Pre-sessions!



Tip! Think in advance about some questions that you may be asked about your issue. Prepare short answers that you can use. For example, prepare an update on each of the recommendations that States made to your country on your specific issue at your country's last UPR.



### What if I don't know the answer to a question?

Don't worry! Say that you need to do some research before responding and ask if you can contact them later with the answer. You can also choose not to answer a question if you feel uncomfortable, or you can ask the moderator to repeat the question if it was not clear. The moderator is there to help!

If there is enough time left at the end of the meeting, you might be able to give a very short **concluding statement** about your human rights issue. This might include:

- A summary of the situation on your issue, repeating one recommendation you made.
- The importance of child participation and children's involvement in the UPR process.
- A brief explanation of your expectations for the Review of your country and what needs to be addressed urgently.

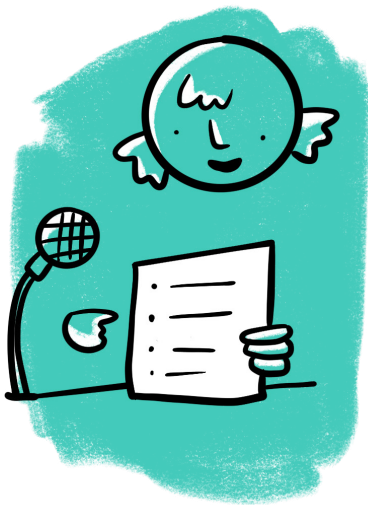


Tip! Prepare a concluding statement in advance in case you get the chance to say it! This is your last opportunity in the meeting to persuade States to prioritise your issue and use your recommendations at your country's UPR Review.



# How Can I Participate At The Review?

All the recommendations from the Recommending States are presented to the State Under Review one month after the Pre-Session, at the Review. In this important 3 ½ hour meeting, States discuss the human rights situation in that country and the issues that State should prioritise in the next 4 ½ years. This meeting takes place in Geneva.



## This is what happens...

### 30 MIN

The State under Review explains progress it has made in realising human rights since the last review.

### 140 MIN

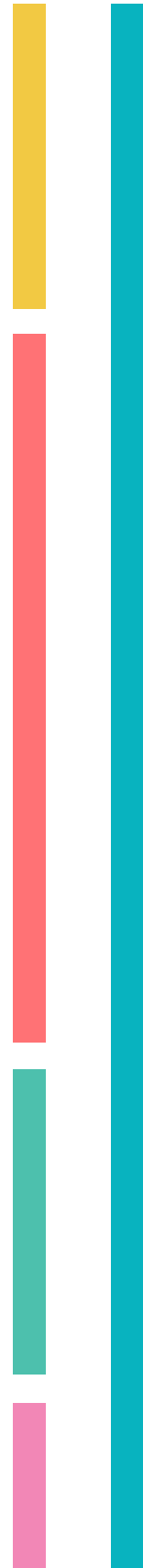
States make recommendations and ask questions. During this discussion, States recommend to the State under Review to take actions to improve its human rights situation.

### 30 MIN

The State under Review answers questions about the human rights situation of its country and addresses some issues raised during the discussion.

### 10 MIN

The State under Review makes final comments.



3 ½ HOURS

Information that describes the human rights situation of the State Under Review is provided in 3 main documents. Each document provides a different point of view on the human rights situation in that country:



### **The national report**

Written by the State under Review following broad national consultations.

### **Summary of other stakeholder's submissions**

Summary of reports written by:  
- National human rights institutions  
- CSOs, NGOs

### **The compilation of United Nations information**

Treaty Bodies, Special Procedures, UN Agencies.



## **Documents for the review of the human rights situation**

Recommending States use these documents to learn about the human rights situation in the country being reviewed and to prepare their comments, questions and recommendations to the State under Review.

## Recommendation A

If a State **supports** a recommendation, it makes a promise in front of all UN Member States to implement the recommendation before the next UPR review.



The State under Review can decide to **support** or **note** a recommendation received at the UPR session. A State cannot “refuse” a recommendation.



## Recommendation B

If a State **notes** a recommendation, it means that the State might not implement or implement partially the recommendation before the next UPR review. It will think about responding about this important issue.



## How you can participate in the review meeting

Only State representatives are able to speak at this meeting. However, you might be able to:

**Attend the UPR Session in person  
(If you can be in Geneva at that time)**



**Hold/ Participate in events on  
the situation of HR in your country  
or at the UN (side event)**



**Provide press briefings in your country,  
or even in Geneva, by using email  
or social media.**

**Attend the UPR Session online in your  
own country, by watching UN  
webcast live or at a later time**





## How Can I Participate After the Review?

A few days after the Review, the draft report containing all the recommendations that your country received can be found on the **OHCHR website**.



About 4-6 months later, your State needs to agree which recommendations it will implement before its next UPR review, and which recommendations it will not be able to fully implement.

The Human Rights Council will then finally adopt your State's report containing all of the UPR recommendations, and the promises it has made to realise these recommendations over the next 4 ½ years.

Let's look at the journey of the States' recommendations:

1

### **The review**

States make recommendations to the State under Review.

*2 to 4 days later:*

2

### **Adoption of the draft report**

The draft report containing all recommendations made at the review is adopted. At this stage, the State under Review can leave all recommendations pending or can already support or note some recommendations. The decision (supported or noted) is not final.

*Approximately 4 months later:*

3

### **Adoption of the final report**

The State under Review has approximately 4 months to give its final answer to recommendations received. It must say which recommendations are supported and which are noted. At the plenary session of the Human Rights Council, the final report is adopted. At this stage, the final report contains all recommendations and a document produced by the State and called "Addendum" contains the State's answers to all recommendations.



## Where can I find the recommendations made to my country?

Look on the **UPR Info database** for all the information on the UPR recommendations for any country. Here you will find the status of the recommendations and the country's responses to them. You can filter recommendations by State under Review, by Recommending State, by UPR cycle, by status of recommendation and by thematic.

### Have you found your country's last UPR recommendations?

Record one recommendation that is important to you.

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## How you can participate in the UPR Implementation Phase

You now have another very important role to play! To support the UPR implementation phase, you can:

### 1. Raise awareness of the UPR Recommendations

People need to be aware of what the government has committed to improve for children and adults living in your country. You could raise awareness by informing:

- The media (including newspapers, tv, radio and social media)
- National parliamentarians
- Embassies in your country
- UN agencies in your country
- Relevant government ministries
- Children and adults in your community, and other members of the public



Tip! If it hasn't done so already, ask your government to translate the recommendations into national language(s) so that people can easily understand them.

Use real examples of how the recommendation affects certain groups of the population- this can help people relate the recommendations to their own lives and experiences.

**Can you think of ways of raising awareness about your issue with lots of people that you might not know? What might you say?**

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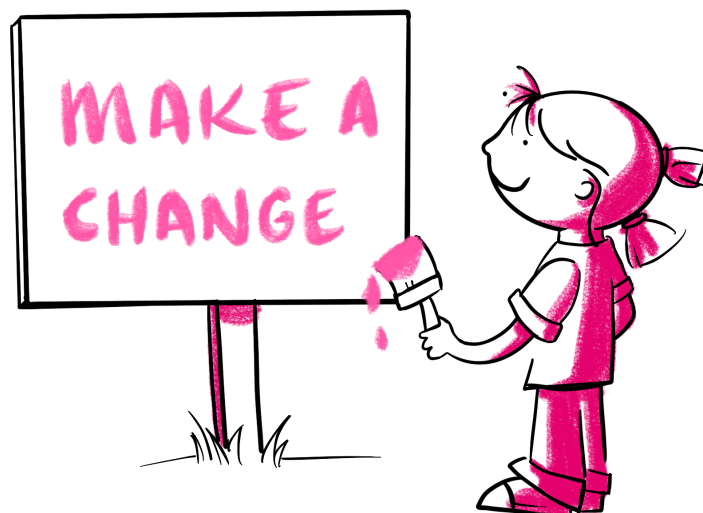
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## 2. Support the implementation of UPR recommendations

By connecting and working together with different stakeholders, including representatives from civil society, national human rights institutions, the media, UN agencies, and even government officials and diplomats from other countries, it's possible to find out what others are doing. You might be able to join forces on activities like campaigns (for example, on the climate crisis, child marriage or education) and help to push for the government, with the biggest responsibility, to make the changes needed.



### 3. Monitor the State's progress to implement the recommendations

"I see that adults make commitments and don't respect them as they should. We have to find ways to force them to respect what they have decided."

Boy, aged 12-14,  
Côte d'Ivoire

As a member of civil society, you can report to the international community on the progress your country is making to implement UPR recommendations, and challenges that it is having.

These are some of the things you could do:

- Provide updates to States that have made recommendations to your country by giving or sending them short factsheets, including recommendations on your issue and how well your State is implementing them. You can do this at any time.
- Send your information to a child rights Geneva-based organisation, like Child Rights Connect, who can provide a 2 minute update on the UPR process in your country at a Human Rights Council meeting. These meetings are held in Geneva, in February, June and September.
- Provide an update on the situation of human rights in your country in a short report to OHCHR. This 'mid-term' report is due about 2 ½ years after your country's UPR. There are no strict guidelines for submitting a UPR mid-term report. UPR Info can help you prepare this, including giving you a format to use.

**Which of these activities would you like to do? What extra help might you need?**

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# FURTHER SUPPORT

See UPR Info's website [www.upr-info.org](http://www.upr-info.org) for information about each country's UPR process, including details about recommendations by each State Under Review. If you have questions or need advice on the UPR process, email UPR Info at [info@upr-info.org](mailto:info@upr-info.org).

See Child Rights Connect's website <https://www.childrightsconnect.org/> for examples of their extensive expertise supporting child human rights defenders to advocate for their rights, and raise awareness to ensure that children's voices are heard at the highest level of decision-making. If you are interested in getting involved in the UPR, contact the team at [secretariat@childrightsconnect.org](mailto:secretariat@childrightsconnect.org).

## Your feedback and recommendations

Child Rights Connect and UPR Info are here to support you to participate in the UPR. They welcome your feedback and suggestions on how to improve the Guide and the UPR process itself. Please send any comments or recommendations to the emails above.



## Useful websites:

For the participation of NGOs at the Universal Periodic Review:

→ [The OHCHR website](#)

OHCHR publications:

→ [A Handbook for Civil Society](#)

→ [Civil Society Space and the United Nations Human Rights System](#)

UPR Info publications:

→ [UPR Info Pre-sessions](#)

→ [The Civil Society Compendium: A comprehensive guide for Civil Society Organisations engaging in the UPR](#)

## Useful tools

→ [UPR Info Database](#)

→ Template of a factsheet

→ Factsheet Example

## Issues & Relevant National Framework

*Approx. 120 words noting recommendations made to your country on the relevant theme in the previous cycles.*

⇒ *Which States made recommendations to your country on your issue(s) of concern?*

*Approx. 200 words outlining relevant national legislation, statistics, policies and initiative.*

⇒ *What is being done at the national level to address your issue of concern? Are there laws, policies, activities being done?*

## Key data

*Main data on your issue of concern which depicts clearly the situation on this issue in your country.*

## Contact Information

Tel 123 456 7890

Fax 123 456 7890

Email admin@email.com

## Challenges

*Approx. 120 words on critical human rights challenges (approx. 3-10 bullet points directly related to the recommendations)*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

## Impacts

*Approx. 800 words on the corresponding impact of each challenge (justifying the need for the recommendation)*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.

## Recommendations

*SMART recommendations*

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.





# Right to education

## SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES FROM PREVIOUS UPR CYCLES

Sri Lanka accepted all three recommendations made during the first and second cycle, relating to; promotion of women’s education, increased accessibility to education, and school reintegration of children who participated or were affected by the conflict. Sri Lanka pledged in the first cycle to continue investment in education and in the second cycle to enhance support to students with mid-day meals, uniforms and learning materials. It further pledged to introduce human rights content in education systems. In its latter pledge it informed that; child rights committees are being established in every school, ongoing island-wide recruitment of Tamil medium teachers and that national competency standards for vocational education were to be made available in all national languages.

## NATIONAL FRAMEWORK

Sri Lanka’s high literacy levels and universal access to primary-level schooling are the outcomes of a free public education system. However, right to education is not a constitutional right.

The Final Report of the Public Representations Committee on Constitutional Reforms (PRC) called for constitutional recognition of the right to education and further suggested “a right to primary, secondary and tertiary education at the cost of the state.

Latest available data show 34% of the schools across the country classified as ‘difficult’ or ‘very difficult’, with only 9 % of schools country-wide

offering Advanced (Secondary) Levels in all subject streams. Rural areas (70% of the population), Estates and war affected North and the East have the least number of well-resourced schools, with access further hindered by caste and ethnicity. The NHDR (2014) also shows that, nationally, 60 % of young people who dropped out or discontinued schooling identified cost of education as a barrier.

In 2017, the state cut over 100 billion rupees on education, ignoring demands to commit 6 % of GDP to education, and is pushing privatization, which may further erode access to education as a right.

## CHALLENGES

High cost of Education

Lack of facilities in schools

## IMPACT

Despite public education being free, families have to shoulder a number of obvious and hidden financial costs—for school maintenance, extra-curricular activities, additional tuition classes and in particular donations for school admittance, which are essentially substantial bribes to the schools. Costs of boarding or hostels and everyday transport, in cases where schools or tuition classes are far, are additional cost barriers to low-income or underprivileged households.

Inter- and intra-regional disparities in school infrastructure, trained staff, choice of subjects and transport have also led to unevenness in access to and quality of education. The latest available data reveals that 34% of the schools across the country are classified as ‘difficult’ or ‘very difficult’, with only 9% of schools (distributed unequally

### CHALLENGES

### IMPACT

Lack of facilities in schools

countrywide) offering A/Ls in all subject streams. Rural areas (70% of the population) have the least number of well-resourced schools. A 2012 school census indicates that 80% of schools in Mannar district, 75% of schools in Kilinochchi district and 53 percent of schools in Mullaithivu district were without electricity. The census further indicates that there are more than 10% of schools in 20 districts out of the 25 districts without access to water.

Privatisation of education

The state is inclined to permit private sector to open private education institutions. The recent case of *Suriarachchi v SLMC* (the *SAITM* case) indicates a regressive trend. In this case, the judiciary implicitly sanctioned the dire deficiencies in state regulation of private tertiary educational institutions.

### RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Eliminate all hidden costs in free public education.
2. Ensure adequate infrastructure, budgetary and human, including their equitable distribution across the country at all levels of the education system.
3. Ensure that the right to education is recognized as a fundamental right in the new constitution.
4. Ensure that education policies recognize the wider social purpose of education.
5. Allocate at least 6 % of GDP for education sector.

