

# CHILDREN CAN NOW ACCESS JUSTICE FROM THE UN!

## Media guide for national NGOs

Great news! Children can now seek justice for human rights abuses from the UN. National NGOs are key to help spread the word. This is a guide to help you raise media awareness in your country/region.

A new treaty, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a Communications Procedure (OP3 CRC), has just received its 10th ratification, meaning it will come into force in three months time. Then child victims of all new or ongoing violations of their rights in States who have ratified the treaty can start bringing cases to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child if no solution is found nationally.

The media can be a great way to let governments and children and their advocates know about this. And national NGOs are best placed to get media attention - you know the language, the children's rights situation in your country and the media contacts better than anyone else.

Below is some advice to help you spread the word via traditional and social media. You can also find resources that help explain OP3 CRC on the campaign website (<http://www.ratifyop3crc.org/material/>), and more are included at the end of the template press release that you can adapt to your country. Please contact [info@ratifyop3crc.org](mailto:info@ratifyop3crc.org) for more information.

Please note that this guide is designed for people who have little experience of working with the media. If your organisation has a press office, or you know how the media works in your country/region, we suggest you use this guide for its key messages, and social media and press release templates.

Good luck!

Ratify OP3 CRC

*International Coalition for the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a Communications Procedure* <http://www.ratifyop3crc.org/>

### TRADITIONAL MEDIA

Despite the social media revolution, traditional media outlets (newspapers, television, radio, magazines etc) are still a great way to get a message out there and debated.

You can target the **key audience** you want to get your message to by thinking about which media outlets they read/tune into and shaping the story in a way that is most interesting for that outlet. Below are some ideas, and you may need to do some research into what media outlets exist and who reads/tunes into them.

- To target government officials, the national broadsheets, flagship news programmes on the

national TV and radio and trade/in house parliamentary magazines might be your best bet.

- To reach children, approach news programmes and magazines that are targeted at children. For example, Newsround on CBBC (children's BBC channel in the UK).
- For lawyers, magazines or reviews for the legal professional could be a good place to start.
- For children's rights advocates, approach NGO newsletters, third sector/charity magazines or media outlets (often magazines) for other professionals who work with children (social workers, teachers etc).

**Key journalists** for OP3 CRC could include: UN correspondents, international affairs, education/children's correspondents, legal correspondents.

### How to approach the media

Different media outlets like different types of approaches - and this can vary from country to country as well.

Some journalists appreciate getting an 'exclusive' on a story. The best way to do this is do some research on a journalist you would like to give the story to, and then contact them individually (either by email or over the phone, and maybe a face-to-face meeting in some cases). Others prefer you to send the story to the general newsdesk.

If you are not sure, the best to do is ring the general newsdesk, explain that you are a local charity/NGO with a children's rights story and ask their advice for the best place to send it.

You should be able to find email addresses (and maybe even phone numbers) on the media outlet's website.

For more advice on how to approach the media, including how to write emails that get the right attention, see [this free guide](#).

**NB: To avoid duplication**, we suggest you liaise with members in your region/country and decide who is going to contact which media outlet, as well as media leads. It is also important to decide who is going to be the media contact on the press release (see the below template).

The below Ratify OP3 CRC members are media leads for the following countries/regions:

- Latin American and Caribbean - ChildFund International (Patricia Toquica): [secretaria@movimientoporlainfancia.org](mailto:secretaria@movimientoporlainfancia.org)
- Southeast Asia - Child Rights Coalition Asia (Melanie Llana): [mllana@childrightscoalitionasia.org](mailto:mllana@childrightscoalitionasia.org)
- Europe - Eurochild (Mafalda Leal): [Mafalda.Leal@eurochild.org](mailto:Mafalda.Leal@eurochild.org)
- Middle East - Ulrika Sonesson Cilliers, [USC@redbarnet.dk](mailto:USC@redbarnet.dk)
- North America - World Visions Canada (Sara L. Austin): [sara\\_austin@worldvision.ca](mailto:sara_austin@worldvision.ca)

They will be in touch with you to organise who is going to send the press release to which contacts and to

discuss whether translation is needed. See below for more guidance on the press release.

## **Press release**

Attached to this guide is a template press release that you can use to send to the media. We suggest that you adapt it for your country, as that is most likely to get the attention of your media.

Some questions to consider answering in your release:

- Has your country signed or ratified the OP3 CRC?
- Are there any persistent children's rights violations in your country, and what type of children might OP3 CRC be able to help? Eg child labour, trafficking, problems in juvenile justice, harmful traditional practices (eg early marriage, circumcision, 'honour' crimes), institutional sexual abuse etc.
- Are there any experts in country who can give interviews/comment - perhaps someone from your organisation, or an external expert you have worked with? This can help give local authority to the message. You should quote these people in the press release, and indicate whether they are available for further comment /interviews and who to contact to arrange this.  
NB: Please do not change the same of the Ratify OP3 CRC spokesperson quoted in the press release. It will be confusing for journalists if loads of people are quoted saying the same thing!
- People stories - some outlets will want to give the story context with a real life story of a child survivor of rights abuse. You can include a child's story in the press release and indicate if they are available for further interview.  
BUT you must be very careful to avoid making this child vulnerable and suffer further rights violations. You must make sure that they understand what their story/interview is being used for and where it will appear, and that they and their parents/guardians give full and informed consent. If they wish to remain anonymous, this must be communicated to the journalist who must then respect this and not publish their name, photograph or anything by which they can be identified. Click [here](#) for more information.

When sending out a press release, it's important to not let journalists know who else you have sent the release to. You can do this by addressing it to them individually, but if there are too many, you can either send it via a database (mail chimp, for example, or one plugged into your website). If you don't have access to one of these you can simply use your standard email and bcc people (but ideally you should have no more than five email addresses bcc'd at a time - some spam filters pick up emails that have more than five bccs and classify as spam. You want the journalist to get the release after all!)

## **Interviews and speaking to the media**

The most important thing to remember when giving a media interview is your key messages (see below)

- repetition is fine. It all helps the key messages sink in.

It is ok to be a little nervous, but just remember that the journalists is asking you because you are the expert on this story. If you are giving a TV interview, remember to keep your body language open and relaxed. If it helps, you can think of some questions in advance with a colleague (include some tricky ones!) and practice giving an interview. If you have a video camera (even if it's just on your phone), video tape it so you can watch it back.

Click [here](#) for some do's and don'ts for speaking to the media (including interviews).

### **Key messages**

The most important thing to remember is that a journalist wants to get a story. This means that they might have an agenda and a story already in mind, but you can also help them understand your story by being clear in how you deliver your key messages.

Key messages are important for media campaigns to ensure consistency and that the public understands what the campaign is about. You should adapt your key messages to your national situation, but below are some suggested general key messages for Ratify OP3 CRC:

- Children whose human rights have been violated will finally be able to bring their cases to the United Nations.
- The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a Communications Procedure (OP3 CRC) makes this possible, and we are urging governments around the world, including XX XX, to ratify it so more children can access justice at the UN.
- Children suffer human rights abuses, including being sentenced to death, trafficked into hazardous child labour, and subjected to violence and sexual abuse. They are routinely neglected by decision makers and their views and opinions ignored. [YOU SHOULD ADAPT THIS TO YOUR COUNTRY]
- The new treaty means the UN will now be better equipped to enforce children's rights for future violations, and more pressure will be put on countries to ensure children's rights are respected.
- Although the new treaty does not guarantee new obligations for States, it creates a new tool for the implementation of children's rights.

### **SOCIAL MEDIA**

**Twitter** can be a great way to build momentum and get more people aware of a story. A lot of human rights organisations, governments and officials, not to mention children, use twitter daily. Below are some suggested tweets (under 140 characters) that you could use.

- *Finally children can access justice for #humanrights abuses from the UN! Has your country #ratifyOP3CRC? <http://goo.gl/6cozFr>*
- *More States need to #ratifyOP3CRC so children everywhere can access justice from the UN.*

Lobby your government. <http://goo.gl/6cozFr>

- Children everywhere suffer #humanrights abuse. OP3 CRC can help the UN implement rights. Has your gov't #ratifyOP3CRC? <http://goo.gl/6cozFr>

**Facebook** is another tool that people use to connect and share information. You have a bit more space to write more with Facebook than Twitter, but you should still keep your message short and simple. Below is an example.

*Finally children can access justice from the UN for human rights abuses! Until now the Convention on the Rights of the Child was the only UN human rights treaty that had no mechanism for victims to seek justice internationally.*

*Children everywhere suffer human rights violations, including being sentenced to death, trafficked into hazardous child labour, and subjected to violence and sexual abuse. They are routinely neglected by decision makers and their views and opinions ignored.*

*More States need to ratify the new treaty (OP3 CRC) so more children can access international justice! #ratifyOP3CRC. Click here for more: <http://goo.gl/6cozFr>  
Like & Share!*

## COMMUNICATING WITH YOUR NETWORKS

If you have a regular newsletter, you can include story about OP3 CRC in your next edition. The below press release could be a good start for the story.

Alternatively, if you don't have a newsletter, you could send an email to your contacts about OP3 CRC.

And of course, you can also post the news on your website using the below press release!

### Template press release

**NEWS RELEASE** - for immediate release [date]

**Options -1 if you country has ratified OP3 CRC, 2 if they have not.**

1. **[XX country] CHILDREN CAN NOW SEEK JUSTICE THROUGH THE UN**

*New treaty enters into force today and [XX name of country] one of first to sign up*

2. **[xx NAME OF COUNTRY] YET TO ALLOW CHILDREN TO SEEK JUSTICE THROUGH THE UN**

*New treaty enters into force today and [XX name of country] urged to sign up so children can access international justice for rights abuses*

**Media contact:** [add in relevant contact details]

**[date]:** Children whose human rights have been violated will finally be able to bring their cases to the United Nations after a new international treaty was enacted today. [Add some details about whether your country has ratified (and when). If not, have they signed and indicated whether they would or would not?]

[Suggest adding some details about persistent children's rights violations in your country]. Children suffer human rights abuses all over the world, including being sentenced to death, trafficked into hazardous child labour, and subjected to violence and sexual abuse. They are routinely neglected by decision makers and their views and opinions ignored. [Ratify OP3 CRC](#), an international coalition of children's rights NGOs, says the UN will now be better equipped to address future violations of children's rights, and more pressure will be put on countries to ensure children's rights are respected.

Until today, and despite its near universal ratification (all countries have ratified except Somalia, South Sudan and the United States), the [UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) was the only international human rights treaty that had no mechanism for victims to seek justice internationally when they could not get redress for violations of their rights nationally.

Campaigners are urging governments around the world to ratify the new treaty so more children can access justice at the UN. A State is not bound by the treaty until it ratifies it.

Flore-Anne Bourgeois Co-Chair of Ratify OP3 CRC said: "Children suffer violations of their rights every day through armed conflicts, discrimination, violence in their communities, schools and homes, as well as lack of access to basic services such as education and healthcare, and their views and opinions are systematically ignored. The list is long. It is about time that abuses of children's rights can be brought to the UN."

"We urge all States to show their commitment to promoting and protecting children's rights by ratifying this new treaty without delay so more children can access international justice."

[You can add your organisation's short quote here. But do not simply replace your name with Flore-Anne's.]

The new treaty, known as the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a Communications Procedure (OP3 CRC) was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in December 2011. The treaty will become active in three months' time after XX [insert last State] ratified it today. Albania, Bolivia, Gabon, Germany, Montenegro, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain and Thailand previously ratified [amend this to say "In addition to [xx name of your country], Albania etc etc [previously ratified](#)]

Cases brought under this new communications procedure will be heard by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, the UN body of 18 independent experts responsible for ensuring the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. From 14 April 2014 (three months after the 10th ratification) victims of all new or ongoing violations in States who have ratified the treaty can start bringing cases to the Committee if no solution is found nationally. The treaty does not cover past violations.

#### **RESOURCES FOR CHILDREN AND THEIR ADVOCATES:**

- A leaflet on OP3 CRC has been developed by Ratify OP3 CRC that contains information and

answers key questions on OP3 CRC. The leaflet is available in [Arabic](#), [English](#), [French](#), [Spanish](#) and [Russian](#)

- A [child-friendly version](#) of the OP3 CRC leaflet has also been produced by Ratify OP3 CRC.
- The official text of OP3 CRC is available in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Spanish and Russian.
- The Rules of Procedure for OP3 CRC, adopted by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, provides detailed provisions on the concrete functioning of the complaint procedure, and can be found [here](#).
- Advocacy Toolkit in English, French and Spanish for campaigners to get their States to ratify.
- A letter for campaigners to send to their governments, urging them to sign/ratify. In English, French and Spanish can be found on the Ratify OP3 CRC [website](#).
- A [guide](#) to using this new complaints procedure by Child Rights International Network (CRIN), a children's rights advocacy NGO, is available free of charge. It also contains a comparison of similar complaints procedures under other human rights treaties.
- Child-friendly version of the Optional Protocol by the Special Representative of the [Security-General \(SRSG\) on Violence against Children](#).

- ENDS -

For media enquiries and interviews, contact [\[put in contact details\]](#)

## NOTES TO EDITORS

[Ratify OP3 CRC](#) - International Coalition for the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a Communications Procedure - is a coalition of international, regional and national non-governmental organisations and networks, human rights institutions and other non-governmental bodies which are committed to achieve rapid ratification and entry into force of the OPCRC on a Communications Procedure (OP3 CRC). It succeeds the NGO Working Group that coordinated the international campaign for the drafting and adoption of the OP3CRC, under the NGO Group for the CRC, based in Geneva, Switzerland. Its Steering Committee is made up of the following organisations: Child Rights Coalition Asia, Child Rights Connect, Child Rights International Network (CRIN), Eurochild, Kindernothilfe, Plan International, Red latinoamericana y caribeña por la defensa de los derechos de los niños, niñas y adolescentes (Redlamyc), Save the Children, Terre des Hommes International Federation (TDHIF) and, World Vision.

[Put in your organisation's website and brief explanation.](#)

## BACKGROUND TO THE UN COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE FOR CHILDREN

What is the Third Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a Communications

## Procedure (OP3 CRC)

It is an international treaty that allows for complaints to be filed against a State before the Committee on the Rights of the Child alleging a violation of any of the rights in the CRC (and the Optional Protocols on armed conflict, and sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography if the State is a party).

How does OP3 work:

There are three types of complaint:

1. Individual complaints - individuals or groups of individuals allege a violation.
2. Inquiries - The Committee can initiate an inquiry into alleged large scale abuse. This doesn't require a specific child or group of children to bring an alleged violation and takes a less judicial model. The Committee can initiate these inquiries itself for large scale abuses.
3. Inter-State communications - one State can lodge a complaint against another. This doesn't need to identify individual victims and not limited to serious or widespread abuses.

For any State that ratifies OP3 after the Protocol enters into force, there will be a three month waiting period before the Committee can receive complaints regarding the State. Complaints can only be filed in relation to violations that took place after the complaints mechanism enters into force in the specific State.

The Committee will only hear complaints if "domestic remedies have been exhausted" - so complainants will have to first challenge the violation in every possible way through the domestic legal system.

If the Committee finds for the victim(s), the Committee will be able to recommend that the government in question offer the child victim(s) remedies such as rehabilitation, reparation, financial compensation or guarantees of non-repetition.