



CASE STUDY

# HOW TO SUPPORT CHILD-LED REPORTING TO THE UNITED NATIONS ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

A Case Study from Albania



World Council of Churches



Save the Children



## Summary

States' human rights and children's rights records are regularly scrutinized through [United Nations and regional monitoring and review processes](#). As part of the process to monitor the progress made by States in implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the [United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child \(the CRC Committee\)](#) received the periodic report of Albania in 2019.

The child-led group Voice 16+ has been operating in Albania since 2000 with support from Save the Children and, during 2021 and 2022, members of this group researched and wrote a child-led complementary report to the CRC Committee focusing specifically on the rights of children to a healthy environment. When provided with reliable and relevant information from a variety of sources, the Committee is better able to make concrete and effective recommendations to States, to more fully guarantee the rights defined in the CRC.

The preparation of a complementary report encourages and facilitates public scrutiny of government policies and provides an opportunity for civil society, National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) and other interested parties (including children) to provide information about how States comply with the CRC. It creates an opportunity for meaningful dialogue between them and all levels of government about a State's efforts to implement their obligations under the CRC, including children's right to a healthy environment.

The CRC is one of the few international human rights treaties to explicitly address environmental issues. However, this case study was written in a context where the impacts of climate change and environmental degradation on children's rights were rarely reflected in State, civil society and children's reports to the UNCRC Committee and in UNCRC and Universal Periodic review (UPR) recommendations. During 2022-2023, the CRC Committee developed an authoritative guidance for states on this issue called "[General Comment 26 on child rights and the environment with special focus on climate change](#)" which provides substantive content which is of great relevance for future reporting.

This case study describes why and how this child-led report was developed focusing on climate change and environment (CCE). It also sets out the steps taken to participate in the UNCRC pre-session and follow-up the recommendations that the CRC Committee adopted as a result of the review. This process is adaptable for use in different contexts and with other monitoring and review processes. The case study is aimed at:

- ✓ child rights practitioners working for civil society organizations operating at local, national, regional, and international levels, who are supporting/are planning to support children to develop a child-led report on climate change and the environment.
- ✓ groups of children who would be interested/would like to be involved in CRC reporting (and other UN and regional reporting opportunities), with particular focus on children's right to a

healthy environment including climate change, although this isn't an explicitly "child friendly" version.

The case study also explores how the UNCRC General Comment No. 26 can be used in reporting and how Voice 16+ prepared [a child-led report and submitted it to the UN OHCHR in April 2024](#). [The report is intended to serve as a source of information for the Universal Periodic Review of Albania](#).

## Background

Child Led Groups (CLGs) called "Voice 16+", were established in 2000 in Albania with the support of Save the Children. The group started operating in schools, addressing issues students were facing. It later started engaging in national decision-making processes. Over the years, these CLGs gained experience in research, advocacy; developing and presenting national reports on the fulfilment of children's rights and representing Albanian children's views in international arenas. The current purpose of the CLGs is to improve the capacity of children to monitor and report on the child rights situation and through child-led initiatives to advocate for their rights both in their local area and at national level. They now operate in four regions in Albania: Elbasan, Dibër, Durrës, and Burrel and are known locally as *Zeri 16+* (*Voice 16+*). Each group comprises 50-60 children aged between 12 and 18 years old who represent wider group of around 2,500 other children volunteers in total.

The Albanian State submitted its combined [5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> periodic report](#) to the CRC Committee in 2019 following the [CRC traditional reporting procedure](#)<sup>1</sup>. The report did not include references to climate or environmental issues, however, the State provided a short response to a question about air pollution and climate in its [response to the list of issues](#) prepared by the CRC Committee. Albania had also submitted a report under the UPR process in 2019 which was equally silent about these issues.

In order to fill this gap, Voice 16+, with the support of Save the Children Albania, submitted a child-led complementary report as part of the CRC reporting process during 2021-2022, focusing specifically on the rights of children to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment. In September 2022, children were invited by the CRC Committee in Geneva to participate in the pre-session for Albania. This was the first time for groups of children to present on this specific right at a CRC Committee pre-session. During the meeting with the Committee experts, two children representing the Child Led Group (1 boy and 1 girl) had the opportunity to present [the complementary children's report](#) findings, their views about the situation in Albania and recommendations focused on issues related to the environment and their impact on children's health and life.

For more detailed information on the process followed by children, please refer to [https://  
crcreporting.childrightsconnect.org/](https://crcreporting.childrightsconnect.org/)

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1. As of 2024 the CRC committee decided to apply the simplified reporting procedure to all periodic reports under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and for initial reports under the Optional Protocols. More information can be found on the UN website or [on Child Rights Connects website](#).

## Why did children choose to report on the right to a healthy environment?

There are various reasons and contextual opportunities behind the children's choice to focus on environmental degradation and climate change in their complementary report.

Between 2019 and 2021, CLGs were engaged in a project called "Children Stand up", funded by the European Climate Initiative (EUKI), through Save the Children Italy in partnership with Save the Children in Albania and Instituto OIKOS. This project focused on enhancing children's awareness about climate and environmental issues and what actions they can take to address these issues. As part of this project, the children had identified the opportunity to submit information to the CRC Committee as part of the CRC reporting process.

The Greta Thunberg movement initiated in 2018 had also influenced children's interest to act on these issues, as demonstrated by regular school strikes in several cities in Albania attended by school children.

The Generation Hope campaign by Save the Children a global initiative that addresses the climate emergency and global inequality, particularly as they affect children has engaged with more than 54,500 children in 41 countries, including Albania, to understand their perspectives on the climate and inequality crisis.

As part of Children Stand Up project, CLGs conducted child-led research on "Air Pollution and its impact on children's health" (2021-2022) in schools in four municipalities. Some of the key findings were:

- *Carbon Dioxide: In the 4 target municipalities, the data shows that the level of carbon dioxide is twice as high compared to the standard, both outside or inside buildings, and as a result, 10 to 20% of children suffer from asthma, headache, lack of concentration, dizziness, and nasal problems.*
- *Humidity: Around 30% of teachers interviewed by children in the four target municipalities think that humidity is a concern inside the school premises.*
- *Unsuitable school infrastructure: Around 25% of interviewed teachers stated that there is mould odour in classes, often caused by water leakage from pipelines. In addition, 35% of the interviewees confirmed lack of heating in winter.*
- *Air quality inside and outside the classes: While outside the air quality seems to be within standards, inside the classes there is a certain proportion of teachers and pupils who think that the air quality is bad (7%). The air quality is also affected by dust, which less than 10% of teachers consider a concern.*

CLGs were contacted to pilot the guidance developed by the Children's Environmental Rights Initiative (CERI) entitled "[Children's Rights and the Environment: guidance on the reporting to the](#)

[Committee on the Rights of the Child](#)” (“CERI tool”, 2020). Exposure to this guidance made the children more aware about the following facts:

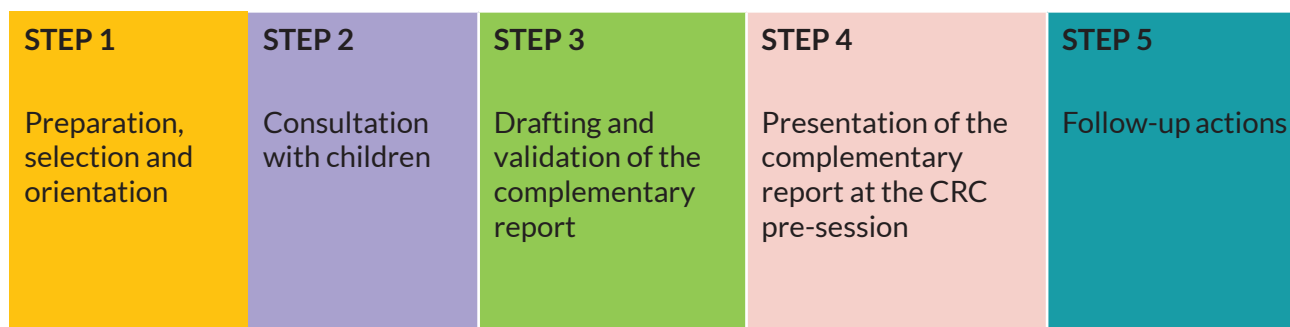
- 1. Children are disproportionately vulnerable to environmental harm** due to the unique and rapid period of physical and mental development that occurs during childhood, particularly between birth and the age of five.
- 2. Certain groups of children face the greatest risks.** This includes girls from families with limited or poor income, children with disabilities, and children living in poverty. These groups are particularly vulnerable due to discrimination and/or lack of material resources or no access to adequate health care or other remedy to cope with risks associated with being exposed to environmentally unsafe environments.
- 3. Children’s rights are consistently overlooked in relation to the environment, including climate change.** Despite the scale and gravity of environmental harm on children’s rights, a lack of awareness and understanding among both child rights and environmental advocates and decision-makers persists. Human rights obligations, including those contained in the CRC, tend to be overlooked in setting and implementing environment including climate-related policies and standards at the national level. Similarly, laws, policies and actions relevant to children’s rights frequently fail to consider environmental factors. The result is a major gap in terms of monitoring, acting, and reporting on the impacts and measures required to fulfil child rights in the context of environmental protection, and on progress made.
- 4. Reporting on children’s environmental rights will enhance legal standards and accountability.** The CRC is one of the few international human rights treaties to explicitly address environmental issues in articles 24 and 29. Despite this, reporting on environmental harm to the Committee on the Rights of the Child remains patchy.

As a result, the children decided to dedicate all of the complementary report on the the question of healthy environment.

*“I didn’t realize how much the environment affects us kids until we learned about it. Now I see why our voices need to be heard in decisions about climate change.”* - A child from the CLG Voice 16+.

# The Child-Led Reporting Process

The child-led reporting process was composed of five main steps:



This diagram shows the child-led reporting process undertaken in Albania. It follows the steps of the [traditional CRC reporting process](#), which was applicable at the time and has since been replaced by the “[Simplified Reporting Process](#)”. For more information about these steps please check [Child Rights Connect’s webpage](#).

## Step 1- Preparation, selection and orientation

### Preparation

A team from Save the Children Albania office, supported by a consultant, was in charge of the preparation process, including defining the scope, objectives, methodologies and process. The selected children were thereafter involved in defining and carrying out subsequent activities.

During this phase, the following activities took place:

- *Resource documents were prepared for children in simple and clear language, illustrated with figures and charts. These included the state report that was submitted to the CRC Committee, previous recommendations received by the state, previous UPR recommendations, data from the child-led research on air pollution, the CRC itself, the CRC reporting process as described on the Child Rights Connect webpage and the CERI tool.*

A calendar of work, with clear dates of events as well as a list of assigned persons was developed.

- *The data collection methodology and materials were prepared. The methodology of data collection, key instruments, and sample size was prepared by an expert, contracted for that purpose. The assessment was cross-sectional and based on a combined quantitative and qualitative method for data gathering purposes. It was regionwide, addressing the situation in the four targeted regions, drawing information from all municipalities of these regions (4 municipalities). Variables were measured using questionnaires (see annex 2 and 3). Of particular significance was the sample size of the children to be consulted. It depends on many factors of thematic and operational concern. Regarding thematic issues, it was of interest to collect opinions and perceptions of children from different gender, age groups (for e.g.: 12-15 and 16-18), from different social and economic family*

*status, geographical location, from different levels of education. From operational point of view, budget, time, and school permissions were of particular importance. The final sample was composed of 860 children, out of which 585 girls. A specific critical part of the process was the list of indicators to be used to assess the implementation of the CRC articles regarding impact of environment and climate change on children's rights. Together with the list of indicators, sources of data were defined. The list of indicators stemmed from the findings of the survey as well as from the pre-discussions with children in their forums, established during the long cooperation with Save the Children.*

- *It was decided to select 35 children that will be leading the data collection, interviews with other children and drafting process. Capacity-building workshops were organised with the interviewers, who had to conduct interviews with children in Burrel, Elbasan, Diber and Durres. During this stage, the methodology of the assessment was further elaborated and shared.*
- *Child Safeguarding Measures: The whole process complied with [Save the Children's Child Safeguarding policy](#) and procedures as they are in force in Save the Children, Albania.*

### **Appointment of children:**

The appointment of children to be involved in the process targeted Child Led Groups "Voice 16+" in the four target regions due to their long experience in child rights monitoring and participation. A series of consultations were organized with groups of children, (around 860 children were consulted, while 35 children were involved in preparing the report) in four targeted locations to introduce the scope, objectives, and the process of the child-led reporting on CCE. **The children themselves were actively engaged in deciding who would take part in the reporting, ensuring their voices and preferences guided the process.** Save the Children and the expert contracted for the purpose of this case study led the pre-consultations.

### **Appointment of children:**

The appointment of children to be involved in the process focused on Child-Led Groups "Voice 16+" in the four target regions due to their extensive experience in child rights monitoring and participation. A series of consultations were held with groups of children (around 860 children were consulted, and 35 children were involved in preparing the report) in the four targeted locations to introduce the scope, objectives, and the process of the child-led reporting on CCE. The children themselves were actively engaged in deciding who would take part in the reporting, ensuring their voices and preferences guided the process. Save the Children and the expert contracted for the purpose of this case study facilitated the pre-consultations.

### **Orientation on the CRC reporting process and the right to a healthy environment:**

During the preparation sessions, children were generally informed about the CRC reporting cycle processes and the related timeframe, including for follow up work. It was clarified to them what role they can play. A series of consultations online and through social media were held with children.

Children were also provided with an orientation regarding CRC provisions of relevance to the right to a healthy environment:



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*Article 24(2) on the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health*

*provides that: "States Parties shall pursue full implementation of this right and, in particular, shall take appropriate measures: [...] to combat disease and malnutrition [...] taking into consideration the dangers and risks of environmental pollution."*

*Article 29(1) on the aims of education which stresses that the right to education must include:*

*Article 24(2) on the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health*

*provides that: "States Parties shall pursue full implementation of this right and, in particular, shall take appropriate measures: [...] to combat disease and malnutrition [...] taking into consideration the dangers and risks of environmental pollution."*

*Article 29(1) on the aims of education which stresses that the right to education must include:*

*"... the development of respect for the natural environment."*

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After the clear description of the CRC, its importance, and the reasons why children are part of the process, their ideas on the key issues, they decided to focus on two big themes, notably, "The most critical environmental issues that affect children" and "education of children on environmental issues".

## Step 2- Consulting with children

### Initial consultations:

Consultations with children were carried out initially through focus groups interviews, conducted in a one-day workshop (November 13, 2021). The aim of this workshop was also to select children that can lead the consultation and drafting process. Children were informed about the agenda of the discussions in advance. Please check annex 1 to know more about the steps considered to ensure children's meaningful participation in consultations and focus group discussions.

The selected 35 boys and girls of CLGs participated in the workshop. Initially, children were informed about the main findings of the survey report "Air pollution and its impact on children's health". Children, part of CLGs, divided into 7 working groups, selected the most critical environmental and climate change issues that have considerable impact on children's life. However, children were of the opinion that the "Environment" must be analyzed from a multidimensional perspective, not only in connection to climate change but also from the point of view of environment protection and care. Therefore, they suggested to organize discussions on two topics, namely "Environment" and "Environmental Education". Each of the groups analyzed these key issues into two questionnaires, namely Questionnaire A" Environment "and Questionnaire B" Education". (See Annex 2).



The picture shows representatives of Child-led Groups in workshop working on prioritizing the topics to focus on in the complementary report.

## Wider consultations

Following up on the lessons learnt from the workshop, wider child led consultations were organized in the 4 regions, utilizing three instruments methodologies, respectively face to face consultations, focus group discussions and through online platforms (including social media). 860 (275 boys and 585 girls) school children of 12 to 19 years old participated in the consultations, from four regions where Save the Children works (see short format of the questionnaire in annex 3. Long format of the questionnaire is available only [in the Albanian language](#)):

The purpose was two-fold. First, to acquire information on the most critical issues of CCE that concern children, and second, to assess each of the issues from the children's point of view, including a cause effect analysis of each issue. Children became aware of the fact that knowing the causes of the problem is of immense importance in formulating and recommend effective policy actions.

- Child-led face-to-face consultations were organized through interviews, using a questionnaire with semi-opened questions.

- Child-led focus group discussions with limited groups of children were organized in the regions where children live. During focus group discussions children were divided in two groups. Each group was asked to provide opinions on a specific topic of discussion within the frame of CCE. Consultations resulted into the ranking of the critical CCE issues that concern children the most. The ranking was based on a system of points, from a choice of 1 to 5, where 5 was the maximal value, demonstrating the level of priority of the selected issue.

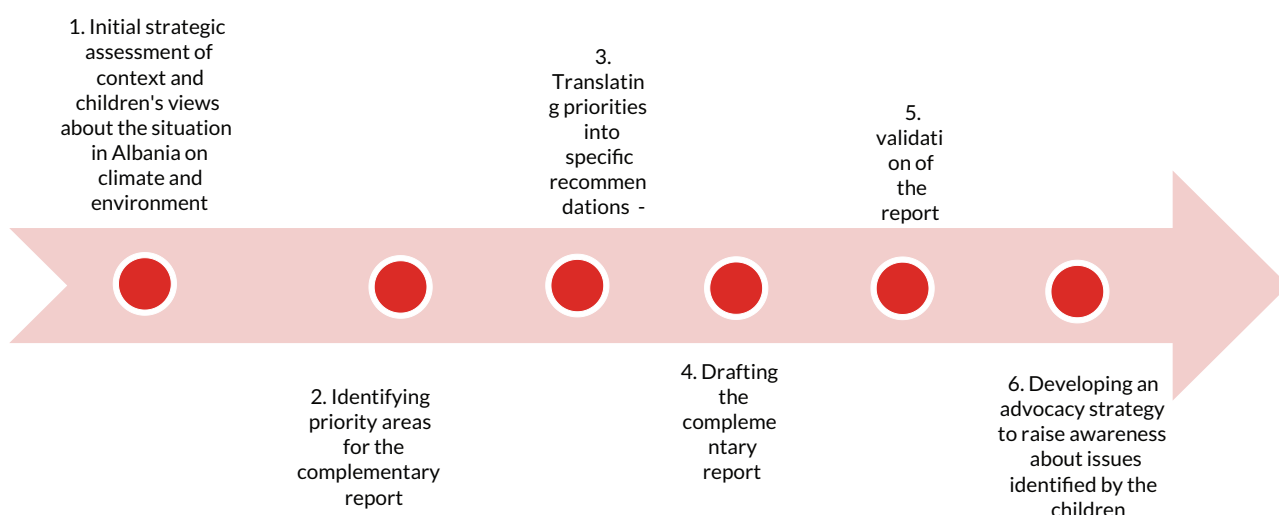
Child-led consultations through online platforms were organized by children themselves, inviting their friends and peers to express their opinions on CCE issues that concern them the most.

- Data collection by children, using online face-to-face questionnaires through google platform. Part of the sample of the questionnaire was prepared in advance and distributed to children through email addresses. In addition, as it was mentioned earlier, focus group discussions were organized with children in each of the project sites, respectively in Elbasan, Diber, Durres and Burrel.
- Data entry and elaboration, formulation of findings was thereafter conducted through the cooperation with an expert recruited by Save the Children.

From these consultations, we learnt that their greatest priority was focused on the environment related considerations and education. This was particularly pertinent given that there is no independent right to a healthy environment in the CRC. 88% of girls and 77% of boys out of the total 860 who participated in the consultation think that climate changes and economic inequalities have influenced their life considerably.

### Step 3- Drafting and validation of the report

Wider consultation with children provided valuable inputs to draft the report.



This image describes the sub-steps in the drafting and validation process

## Drafting of the report

The report was drafted by the consultant contracted from Save the Children, based on the input received from children and feedback gathered during the periodic consultation process with the group of children selected to lead consultations and drafting process.

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### Children's recommendations

#### ENVIRONMENT

##### Waste collection:

- ✓ *prepare the area waste plans for 12 districts.*
- ✓ *raising public awareness related to waste generation.*
- ✓ *set up the promotion action for waste reduction.*
- ✓ *compiling regional waste management plans.*

##### Re-creational, development and entertainment facilities, Green Spaces, Sports facilities and Schools Infrastructure:

- ✓ *Revise fund raising policy to establish a supportive environment for infrastructure investments into schools, guaranteeing that municipalities can exercise their competences regarding construction, infrastructure, maintenance, and utilities.*
- ✓ *Establish dedicated funds to back Environmental Policy at LG*

##### Dioxide carbon:

- ✓ *monitoring of air quality in line with EU requirements, in every municipality of Albania.*
- ✓ *control and reduction of discharges of gases to the atmosphere by motorised vehicles.*
- ✓ *control and reduction of dust caused by construction.*
- ✓ *planning for air quality management at LG.*

#### ENVIRONMENT EDUCATION

##### School Curricula:

- ✓ *Alongside the process of Quality Learning, a strategic goal of Education Strategy, Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport has to further invest to harmonize school curricula and extra-curricular activities, centred at environment protection and care. Parents as well as business sector have to strengthen cooperation with school, to support the organization of activities, aimed at the promotion of Environmental education, which at the same time will impact on citizens awareness raising.*
- ✓ *Based on UNESCOESD World Conference, ESD should be a core component of all education systems at all levels by 2025.*

##### Citizens' awareness raising:

- ✓ *Systematic, long-term adult education programme on the environment would be useful to raise local awareness (in rural communities) of the importance of protecting and sustainably*

*using natural resources, and on the benefits of such environmentally friendly practices such as ecotourism and Eco agriculture.*

- ✓ *Support the further alignment, at global, regional, and national levels, of the education, environment, climate, sustainable economy, and other relevant development agendas, and enhance networking between different stakeholder groups in order to ensure that efforts are mutually supportive and complementary and support structural mainstreaming of ESD;*

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Save the Children supported with the submission of [the complementary children's report](#) via, Child Rights Connect platform

## Validation of the report

Findings from the draft complementary report were shared with children through a series of additional consultations. These were organized with around 120 children, mainly through online platforms to validate the findings from the draft complementary report. Participants' comments contributed to validating the findings and improving the quality of the report.

Following the validation, the report was revised and finalised. Thereafter the 35 children developed a data dissemination and advocacy plan. While priority areas for advocacy stemmed from findings of the assessment, key stakeholders (children, parents, government, media) were responsible to decide on how to address them.

Open discussions with children through social media on recommendations to raise the awareness of other children, families, communities, and media. Children, part of CLG as well as participants of the process, suggested to use their social media channels to share the concerns with other children and get other valid opinions from them. This practice produced valid inputs to further elaborate results and emphasize achievements.

Prior to the pre-session meeting in Geneva in September 2022, Save the Children increased children's capacities on child rights reporting mechanisms, and children learned how to draft a summary report with specific findings and recommendations. The children also learned how to draft an advocacy brief which was shared with stakeholders, embassies, media prior to the pre-session. They developed a working plan for following up on the implementation of the recommendations provided by the Committee on the Rights of Children on the implementation the CRC in Albania.

In September 2022, representatives of Voice 16+ were invited by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in Geneva to participate in the dedicated pre-session for Albania, seen as a preliminary review for the Committee to gain more details from various non-governmental stakeholders to inform their questions to the State Party under review. Two representatives from Child Led Group (1 boy and 1 girl), participated in the 93rd pre-session of Albania. During the meeting with the Committee's experts and children from different countries of Europe and the Middle East, children from Albania had the opportunity to present the complementary children's report findings and recommendations focused on issues related to the environment and their impact on children's health and life. The report presented by Albanian children to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, contained data and views of children about the situation of respecting the rights of children in relation to the

environment, as well as their recommendations for improving the situation.

CLGs conducted additional awareness and advocacy activities after the pre-session:

- *Children representatives of the CLGs involved in the child-led CRC complementary report presented the report to national and international stakeholders in Albania as well. A meeting with the Ambassador of the Italian Embassy in Albania was organized in October 2022, right after the meeting in Geneva in the frame of the advocacy efforts, considering the role the foreign missions have in pushing for the implementation of the recommendations. In this meeting, children's representatives of the "Voice 16+" had the opportunity to present findings and recommendations of the Child – Led CRC Complementary Report submitted to UN Child Rights Committee in Geneva. Children emphasized the need for more attention and support regarding children participation in decision-making on issues that concern them, as well as for more support to children and communities affected by or at risk of being more affected by climate change and economic inequalities.*
- *During November 2022, known as the CRC month across Save the Children Albania, children's representatives of Voice 16+ participated in numerous awareness raising and advocacy events, where they had the opportunity to raise the issues reported in the Complementary report, as below:*
  - o *On World Children's Day, 25th of November 2022, the Albanian Ministry of Health and Social Protection, the Ministry of Education and Sports, the Minister of State for Youth and Children, also the State Agency for Children's Rights and Protection, as well as in cooperation with national and international partner agencies and organizations gathered to convey messages of equality, inclusion, peace, care, health and protection of environment. Around 300 children participated in the event and disseminated key messages to the representatives of ministries to address the CCE related concerns to relevant authorities.*
  - o *The children of Voice 16+, raised awareness and advocated for addressing climate change and economic inequality related issues through the theatrical show "Windmill" which was initiated, designed and performed on stage by the children of Voice 16+, Elbasan. Through their theatrical performance, the children addressed issues related to the impact of climate change and economic inequalities on children, emphasizing their right to a healthy environment, the importance of alternative energy sources to prevent climate change, children's participation in decision-making and the necessity of support and investment for children and young people. The show was attended by local and central authorities and presented in the local theatre of the city of Elbasan, with an audience of around 300 people.*

## Step 4- Follow up actions

The pre-session was followed up by a [list of issues or questions](#) that the CRC Committee sent to the Government of Albania and where a specific question was asked about climate and environment measures. The state submitted [a reply](#) to complement the State report. Thereafter the plenary session where the CRC Committee dialogues with the Government took place in 2023. And as a result, a list of recommendations, included in so-called "[concluding observations](#)" were elaborated by the Committee, for the State to implement., which were in line with the complementary report

submitted from children. The document included the following concerns and recommendations on children's rights and the environment:

CRC/C/ALB/CO/5-6 (CRC 2023)

**I.Children's rights and the environment (arts. 2, 3, 6, 12, 13, 15, 17, 19, 24 and 26–31)**

37. Concerned about the negative effects of air pollution, poor waste management and greenhouse gas emissions, as well as about the State party's high natural disaster risk scores for earthquakes (9.3 out of 10), tsunamis (7.8) and droughts (6.6), and recalling its general comment No. 26 (2023) on children's rights and the environment, with a special focus on climate change, and targets 3.9 and 13.1–13.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Conduct an assessment of the effects on children's health of polluted air and of water and soil pollution caused by poor waste management practices as a basis for designing a well-resourced strategy to remedy the situation, regulate the maximum permissible concentrations of air and water pollutants and improve waste management;

(b) Take measures to mitigate the impact of potential climate-related or human-caused disasters on children and strengthen the resilience of families and communities and their capacity to avoid, survive and recover from the consequences of such disasters ;

(c) Ensure that health-care professionals receive training in the diagnosis and treatment of the health impacts of environmental harm;

(d) Continue to increase children's awareness of and preparedness for climate change and natural disasters by incorporating them into the school curriculum and teacher training programmes .



*This is an extract on climate and environment from the CRC Concluding observations for Albania (2023)*

Right after the submission of the Concluding Observation Report from Committee on the Rights of the Child to the Albanian government authorities, the follow up actions took place, respectively:

- Screening of the observations in the Concluding Observation Report for Albania to detect the children's recommendations that were provided to the Albanian government. – 68% of the recommendations given from children were reflected.
- Organization of meetings with children to introduce the Concluding Observation Report for Albania as well as to inform them regarding the considered recommendations.
- Together with children, make decision about the selection of the most critical recommendations, usually one or two, which should be suggested to the Albanian government for implementation, whilst children would continue to monitor their implementation.
- The establishment of an advocacy plan to push the Albanian government to implement those recommendations.
- The encouragement of children to conduct awareness raising campaigns on the CRC recommendations.
- The promotion of child-led group to organize public event on findings and recommendations at local and national level.
- The provision of support to children to develop a monitoring plan regarding the implementation of CRC recommendations.

Children's experience through CRC was evidenced and promoted as best practices by Save the Children. The two children who had represented Albania during CRC reporting sessions were invited

to share their experience with their respective CLGs. They emphasized the challenges of the whole process of CRC report preparation and presentation, but at the same time they addressed the lessons learnt. They invited children to seriously think of issues that hamper the realization of their rights as well as to raise their voice in suggesting solutions.

In the concluding observations to the state of Albania, the CRC Committee refers to “General Comment 26 on child rights and the environment with focus on climate change”. It was released in September 2023 by the CRC Committee and is an authoritative guidance explaining what states are supposed to do to implement the CRC in the context of environmental and climate degradation. The Committee also took a decision (decision 19, “implementation of General Comment 26”) to add a new cluster in the dialogue between the Committee and states entitled “child rights and the environment”. Applicable from January 2024, this decision officially requests States, UNICEF/UN entities, NHRIs and civil society organizations to gather and submit more evidence and information on this subject as part of the monitoring and review process. It will therefore be a useful guidance for civil society and children as a complement to the concluding observations received when engaging decision-makers on children’s right and the environment.

## Achievements and Results

A key result is that the Concluding Observations received by the government of Albania included recommendations on climate and environment, including issues raised in the children’s report. For the children involved, the most significant achievement of the process was the raised awareness of children regarding CCE and their serious engagement in the submission of the key recommendations to the Albanian government for implementation.

As a result, CLGs have also decided to dedicate their submission to the UPR reporting process on climate and environment. The [UPR Child - Led submission from Voice 16+](#) was submitted in April 2024.

It is worth highlighting that an adolescent from Albania participated in the UPR Pre-session organised by UPR-Info in August 2024, making a strong impact. Her involvement demonstrated how the advocacy work initiated as part of the CRC was effectively used in the UPR reporting and advocacy efforts.

In addition, the whole process is associated with other important outcomes, namely:

- ✓ Child/youth groups, 12 – 18 years old, were empowered to actively influence the implementation of child rights to a safe and healthy environment by using the CRC reporting mechanism.
- ✓ Awareness was raised amongst children/youth about the child rights to a safe and healthy environment.
- ✓ Capacities of children on what to report on, how to report on child rights to a healthy and safe environment using CRC international reporting mechanism, how they can hold decision makers to account using human rights accountability mechanisms, increased.



- ✓ Children fully aware and capable of developing key CCE recommendations, which are taken into consideration by CRC and are incorporated into Concluding Observation Report for Albania country.
- ✓ Children trained to understand the purpose of the reporting, its importance, the stages of the process, the value of their contribution and how to structure their submission – give children comprehensive and age-appropriate training about the national and international stages of the CRC reporting process.
- ✓ Children capable of following up the process through the organization and implementation of advocacy plan and monitoring the Albanian government actions versus the implementation of the recommendations.

## Main challenges and lessons learnt

**Adapting to children’s schedules:** During the child-led reporting process it was evident that flexibility in terms of the time schedule is necessary when working with children, as they may have other engagements related to their education. Most activities, such as meetings/workshops, were conducted during weekends, or remotely due to COVID-19, so that children would not miss school or other private engagements.

**The role of Child Led Group:** Training CLGs on various issues proved an effective way to cascade information, build the capacities of other children and expand the reach of children receiving information and knowledge, through more relevant means and age-appropriate ways.

**The need to create nurturing environment for children to be heard:** It is important to create a nurturing environment for children to be heard, because during the child-led reporting process it became evident that children and young people were not heard in their schools or by relevant institutions, which has resulted in their little trust in public institutions. For this reason, more consultative meetings with children and young people took place. More information sessions need to be organized with school staff so they can better understand the importance of children’s participation in decision making in school settings.

**Impact on institutional behaviors and patterns engaging with children:** Initiatives like this help to strengthen the capacity of staff of relevant state institutions and democratic process to ensure that children’s rights and protection are implemented and monitored. Standardization of procedures, coupled with their promotion at the local government level, are direct results of effective institutional interventions. These capacities transcend into the civil society, creating opportunities for increased participation of children in processes that directly affect them, their presence and their future.

**Empowered children:** Continuous training and participation in activities has improved children’s ability to understand and use their rights in the community, in school and within the family. During this initiative several focus groups with children were organized, many mentioned that the process had affected their personal growth and social skills. Although it is difficult to measure the impact the process has had on children at this stage, their personal growth, the technical language they

use to explain issues related to environment in their context, and their understanding of the interaction between actors at local and central level, indicate the process impact. Children and other stakeholders interviewed share the opinion that participating in the process has had an impact on their personal growth. Almost all interviewed stakeholders stated being impressed by the children's ability to understand the issues and communicate with different actors.

**Children's suggestions regarding new projects:** Addressing climate change and the environment from children's point of view showed that children are willing to mobilize their knowledge, efforts, energy to contribute and bring the desired change. They would welcome participation in simple projects that aim to impact on environmental education as well as reduction of waste and air pollution, things that are missing in the Albanian culture, such as:

- ✓ Reduce, reuse, and recycle: Children can contribute to raise awareness to reduce the waste by using reusable bags, water bottles, and containers. They can explain to adults to recycle paper, plastic, and glass.
- ✓ Plant trees: Children can be involved in a voluntary basis in the projects of planting trees, a great way to help the environment.
- ✓ Use public transportation: Encourage the use of public transportation, walk, or bike instead of driving.
- ✓ Speak up: Promote children to speak up about climate change. They can write letters to their elected officials, participate in climate strikes, and talk to their friends and family about the importance of protecting the environment.

## Quick tips for Child – led reporting process on environment

The following points are quick tips and recommendations on the integration of climate and other environmental issues in child informed or child-led report to the CRC Committee:

- **Work with pre-existing groups of children**, and where they do not exist, establish and train a sustainable group for systematic child-led monitoring and reporting. It is important to have diverse groups, representing various parts of the country, and groups of children including girls, boys, children, nonbinary children, children with disabilities.
- **Collaborate with other organizations** to reach more children and to have more impact.
- **Educate on CRC Reporting and on environmental impacts:** Ensure there is sufficient time to educate children on environmental reporting and their participation rights. Encourage peer-education between the children.
- **Be proactive in highlighting children's concerns about environmental impacts on children**, in your complementary reports
- **Create a Safe Environment:** Provide a comfortable platform for children to express their views, ensuring their contributions are respected. Vary the consultation methodologies

and the format i.e. online and face to face. Assign adult mentors to guide children through reporting, advocacy, and monitoring and respond to their questions.

- **Include children in each step:** Ensure children are part of decision-making in each step of the reporting process. Listen to their ideas and allow children the freedom to be creative in their reporting methods.
- **Follow-up to recommendations is important:** Be persistent on following-up to the implementation of CRC concluding observations.
- **Reuse collected data from children to inform other monitoring and review processes such as the Universal Periodic Review of the UN Human Rights Council.**
- **It will be important to consider content of General Comment 26 in reporting and advocacy:** The content of GC26 is very relevant in future civil society or children's submissions to CRC, UPR or other UN or regional monitoring and review processes as well as in any advocacy on children's rights and the environment.
- **Adapt to Simplified Reporting:** Be aware of the [simplified reporting procedure](#) applicable from January 2024 for all reporting on the implementation of the CRC and Optional Protocol.

## What did it cost?

### Preparation Phase:

Cost for refreshment, rent for a meeting room for the introductory meeting with children, local authorities and CSOs. (US\$800)

Total 1: USD \$800

### Consultations:

Cost for the organization of awareness raising activities: including cost for: awareness raising materials, refreshment for participants. (USD\$1,200)

Cost for the organization of training with children and CSOs, including cost for: Trainer's fee, training materials, rent for the training room, coffee break for participants, lunch for participants. (USD\$1,000)

Total 2: US\$2,200

### Drafting and validation of the report:

Cost for supporting children in preparing child rights monitoring report, including cost for research expert to guide and support children throughout the development of the child rights monitoring report. (US\$2,500)

Cost for workshops with children to discuss/validate main findings and recommendations coming from the child rights monitoring report, including refreshment for participants, rent for the workshop room, workshop materials. (US\$1,500)

Cost for periodic meetings with CSOs working on the development of the joint CRC Complementary report, including refreshment for participants, rent for the meeting room. (US\$250)

Total 3: US\$4,250

*Presenting the report to UNCRC - Pre-session:*

Cost for participation of two children and the chaperone in the pre-session, including travel and allowance cost. (US\$5,000)

Cost for the preparation meeting of the CSOs for the participation in the Pre session, including refreshment for participants. (US\$1,000)

Total 4: US\$ 6,000

*Follow up of recommendations:*

Cost for the awareness raising and advocacy activities organized by children – lump sum for 4 awareness raising activities and 4 advocacy activities. (US\$1,300)

Cost for supporting advocacy activities of the CSOs – 4 lump sums for 4 advocacy activities; (US\$1,450)

Total 5: US\$2,750

Overall total: US\$16,000

## Useful resources

The following are resources used and/or recommended to peers:

- (1) *Child Participation - Child Rights Connect: CRC Reporting Cycle*. <https://crcreporting.childrightsconnect.org/child-participation-faqs/>
- (2) *Together with children – for children*. <https://childrightsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/guide-together-en.pdf>
- (3) *“Children’s Rights and the Environment: guidance on the reporting to the Committee on the Rights of the Child”, Children’s Environmental Rights Initiative (CERI), 2020*
- (4) *How to Prepare a Child-led Report for the Simplified Reporting Procedure, a case study from South Africa, How to Child Rights series, 2022*
- (5) *How to Child Rights series’ thematic launch webinar #1 “How to advance children’s right to a healthy environment”, 1 March 2022*
- (6) *UNCRC General Comment 26 on Child Rights and the environment with special focus on climate change, UN, 2023.*
- (7) *How to advocate for children’s rights in the climate crisis through the UPR: a case study from Australia, How to Child Rights series, 2022*
- (8) *How to Advance Children’s Rights using Recommendations from United Nations and Regional Human Rights Monitoring and Review Processes, How to Child Rights series, 2022*
- (9) *UPR Factsheet: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/13r6H0Vepho74yMN3\\_znCaA7thT7DatS4/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/13r6H0Vepho74yMN3_znCaA7thT7DatS4/view)*
- (10) *The UPR & Me: <https://childrightsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/upr-proyecto-final-english.pdf>*
- (11) *List of definitions, in English, French and Spanish*
- (12) *List of acronyms, in English, French and Spanish*

## Contact and document details

If you want to know more or provide feedback, please contact:

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**HOW TO CHILD RIGHTS** is a platform that facilitates co-creation and peer learning on child rights in practice. It offers a series of practical, high quality, tried and tested tools, guidance and case studies and peer exchanges, to support effective and innovative programming - including advocacy - for children’s rights across the civil society sector, in close collaboration with other actors including academia.

Launched in 2022, the Series is developed in close collaboration with various organisations and individuals to support practitioners within the sector, across organisational, geographic and language barriers.

For more tools, please visit: <https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/article/how-to-child-rights/>

## Annex 1:

### Checklist of steps considered to ensure children's meaningful participation in consultations and focus group discussions.

*These steps have been used to inform step 2 (consultating with children).*

Are you conducting your activities in a way that meaningfully enable child participation?

- Have children been given all the information they need to form a view?
- Have different options been provided to them?
- Have different ways of communicating been offered to them? Drawing, writing letters, singing songs, putting comments in anonymous comment boxes, etc.
- Do the children know that this process is voluntary and that they can opt out at any time?
- Is the language being used age appropriate, jargon free and aligned to references appropriate to children's ages and interests?
- Have you created an atmosphere that encourages asking questions and seeking clarifications?
- Are you frequently checking that your understanding of children's inputs are correct?
- Is there a process/system for communicating children views and meaningfully embedding them into decision making?
- Have children been informed about the chain of communication and who will be privy to their views?
- Are your facilitators experienced and trained in conducting child participation activities?
- Have stakeholders been mapped together with children to identify who needs to know what?
- Have children been informed about the whole decision-making process and understand their role in the process in a way that manages expectations?

## Annex 2:

### Questionnaire A and B

*This questionnaire was used in step 2, during the initial consultations of the child-led reporting process.*

**Title: Environmental Issues and their impact on children’s health**

**Identification of the most critical issues regarding: Air Pollution and Environment and Environmental Education.**

#### Topic A: Air Pollution and Environment.

Q.1: Considering your knowledge about the risks associated with environmental pollution, kindly assess the following issues regarding their priority, using marks from 1 to 5, 1 minimum and 5 maximums:

Issues	Points
1. Waste collection	
2. Dioxide carbon	
3. Cleanliness of premises and hygiene	
4. Humidity	
5. Lack of recreational, development and entertainment facilities.	
6. Lack of green spaces	
7. Lack of sports facilities	
8. Unsuitable school infrastructure	
9. Insufficient spaces	
10. Air quality inside and outside the classes	

Q.2. Do you think that respective policies have to be revised? Put “X” to illustrate your opinion in the appropriate square for each of the formulated critical issues.

Issues	Yes	No	Don’t know
1. Waste collection			
2. Dioxide carbon			
3. Cleanliness of premises and hygiene			
4. Humidity			
5. Lack of recreational, development and entertainment facilities.			
6. Lack of green spaces			



- 7.Lack of sports facilities
- 8.Unsuitable school infrastructure
- 9.Insufficient spaces
- 10. Air quality inside and outside the classes

Q.3: According to your opinion, which one is the most critical stakeholder? Put “X” to illustrate your opinion, knowing that CG stands for Central Government, LG for Local Government, S for School, C for community and BS for Business Sector.

Issues	CG	LG	S	C	BS
1. Waste collection					
2. Dioxide carbon					
3. Cleanliness of premises and hygiene					
4. Humidity					
5. Lack of recreational, development and entertainment facilities					
6. Lack of green spaces					
7. Lack of sports facilities					
8. Unsuitable school infrastructure					
9. Insufficient spaces					
10. Air quality inside and outside the classes					

**Topic B: Environmental Education.**

Q.1: Considering your knowledge about the importance of environmental education, kindly assess the following issues regarding their priority, using marks from 1 to 5, 1 minimum and 5 maximums:

Issues	Points
1. Provision of comprehensive and inclusive education on “Environment”.	
2. Knowledge and adoption of hygiene rules by children and adults, alike	
3. Awareness raising of children, teachers, parents, and their caregivers.	
4. Inclusion of local government to monitor the implementation of environment standards.	

- 5. Organization of extracurricular activities in schools, that deal with Environment
- 6. Inclusion of “Environment” into school curriculum.
- 7. Awareness raising of communities on “Environment”.

Q.2. Do you think that respective policies have to be revised? Put “X” to illustrate your opinion in the appropriate square for each of the formulated critical issues.

Issues	Yes	No	Don't know
1. Provision of comprehensive and inclusive education on “Environment”.			
2. Knowledge and adoption of hygiene rules by children and adults, alike			
3. Awareness raising of children, teachers, parents, and their caregivers.			
4. Inclusion of local government to monitor the implementation of environment standards.			
5. Organization of extracurricular activities in schools, that deal with Environment			
6. Inclusion of “Environment” into school curriculum.			
7. Awareness raising of communities on “Environment”.			

Q.3: According to your opinion, which one is the most critical stakeholder? Put “X” to illustrate your opinion, knowing that CG stands for Central Government, LG for Local Government, S for School, C for community and BS for Business Sector.

Issues	CG	LG	S	C	BS
1. Provision of comprehensive and inclusive education on “Environment”.					
2. Knowledge and adoption of hygiene rules by children and adults, alike					
3. Awareness raising of children, teachers, parents, and their caregivers.					
4. Inclusion of local government to monitor the implementation of environment standards.					

5. Organization of extracurricular activities in schools, that deal with Environment

6. Inclusion of “Environment” into school curriculum.

7. Awareness raising of communities on “Environment”.

Thank you for your cooperation!

## Annex 3:

### Questionnaire (shortened format)

This questionnaire was used in step 2, during the wider consultations of the child-led reporting process.

#### Part one: The impact of climate change

1. What do you understand by climate change? Do you think the problems caused by climate change affect girls more than boys, or do they affect both genders equally?
2. Does climate change increase the risk of violence against girls? What about the risk of the family's decision to marry girls at an early age?
3. Does climate change increase the risk of girls dropping out of school and increasing obstacles to girls' participation in extracurricular activities, community life or social life?
4. To your knowledge, was the COVID vaccination or vaccination in general handled differently for boys compared to girls?

#### Second part: Policies

5. In general, regarding the issue of climate change, do you think that policymakers should be concerned and take concrete actions?

If so, could you give your opinion on the following actions:

- ✓ In-depth study on the negative impact of climate change on the violation of children's rights in general, and girls in particular
  - ✓ Intervention through local policies to specifically help families facing natural disasters, especially to prevent gender discrimination in relation to education, nutrition, participation, social protection, health, and reproductive care
  - ✓ Awareness of the entire society through media to transform the issue of climate change into an issue of the entire society
  - ✓ Increasing school attention on the need for in-depth education on the role and impact of climate on gender-based inequalities
  - ✓ Education of the whole society on the need to react and express concern about climate changes and their negative impact on people's lives, on the growth of social and economic inequalities, especially those based on gender
  - ✓ Any other measure or policy that you deem necessary?
6. Is there anything else you would like to add that was not covered during today's discussion but that you consider useful to address?