

# **Alternate Report Coalition - Children's Rights South Africa (ARC-CRSA)**

## **Press release**

### **UN committee on children's rights releases recommendations to strengthen child rights in South Africa**

**For immediate release: 07 October 2016**

Following the review of South Africa's compliance with the Convention on the Rights of Children in September 2016, the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child (The Committee) issued a comprehensive set of recommendations to the Government of South Africa in a bid to strengthen the realisation of child rights in the country. While the Committee recognises the significant progress that South Africa has made to improve children's lives in areas such as early childhood development, the child support grant and the reduction in child mortality, they focuses extensively on main areas of concern, systemic challenges and critical areas that require further attention and recommendations for action.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child is composed of 18 international independent experts, who monitor implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, ratified to date by 196 States. They also monitor implementation of the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (OPSC) and the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict (OPAC).

The Alternate Report Coalition – Children's Rights South Africa (ARC-CRSA), a civil society alliance driven by 11 leading organisations on children's rights in the country (See below for list of organisations), welcomes the recommendations. *"We are encouraged to see that the Committee has responded to and taken on board a number of the recommendations that we made"* Said Carol Bower, a child rights activist and member of ARC-CRSA.

For the most part, the recommendations are specific enough that if implemented by the South African government, they can add value to government's efforts to achieving children's rights.

The Committee has made strong recommendations for improved governance on children's rights overall, calling for the South African government to establish inter-ministerial level leadership and coordination on children's rights, strengthen the independent oversight mechanisms in place, and to ensure effective child rights budgeting, so that laws, policies and plans can be implemented in a manner that positively impacts on children's lives.

- The recommendations include addressing the alarming rates of violence against children by improving measures for violence prevention, child protection and access to justice.

- They can add meaning to efforts to increase equitable access to health rights, including improving access to adolescent health, and addressing the unacceptably high rates of child malnutrition in South Africa.
- The recommendations can be used to help address the myriad rights violations against children with disabilities and against migrant, refugee and asylum seeking children in South Africa in terms of access to education, healthcare and social security amongst others.
- They address and give direction to the need for greater efficiency and accountability in expenditure in the education system to increase both equitable access and the quality of education.
- They call on government to fix problems with birth registration processes that result in the most marginalised children not accessing services, and leaving some at risk of statelessness. They also recommend that the South African government consider increasing the amount of the Child Support Grant to address the impact of poverty on children in South Africa.

This process is not only about monitoring progress, it is about State accountability to its commitments for children’s rights. *“Government made a commitment to meet these standards, and on top of that, our Constitution requires that they be considered when interpreting the rights in the Constitution – so these recommendations can strengthen our calls to realise children’s rights”* said Samantha Waterhouse from the Dullah Omar Institute, UWC and the coordinator of ARC-CRSA.

*“The fact that the committee refers to other government commitments such as the Sustainable Development Goals in making recommendations to South Africa, not only adds to the weight they carry but emphasises the applicability of these obligations in all areas pertaining to children’s rights”,* said Mandivavarira Mudarikwa, an attorney at the Legal Resources Centre, and a member of ARC-CRSA.

Ends

For more information on the reporting process, please see below. For the South African Government and ARC-CRSA reports, visit <http://dullahomarinstitute.org.za/women-and-democracy/south-africas-reporting-on-childrens-rights-to-the-un>.

The concluding observations can be accessed at [http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/treatybodyexternal/TBSearch.aspx?Lang=en&TreatyID=5&TreatyID=10&TreatyID=11&DocTypeID=5](http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/TBSearch.aspx?Lang=en&TreatyID=5&TreatyID=10&TreatyID=11&DocTypeID=5)

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## About the Alternate Report Coalition - Children's Rights South Africa

ARC-CRSA, is a civil society alliance driven by 11 leading organisations on children's rights in the country (See below for list of organisations). ARC-CRSA compiled one of South Africa's shadow reports addressing its concerns over child rights in South Africa that was presented to the UNCRoC in February 2016. The report included the participation of 52 authors representing 42 organisations in the drafting. These shadow reports serve as civil society's response to the Country Reports that governments are required to submit every five years under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

The ARC-CRSA is led by the following eleven organisations:

- Centre for Child Law, University of Pretoria
- Children's Institute, University of Cape Town
- Childline South Africa
- Community Paediatrics, University of the Witwatersrand
- Dullah Omar Institute, University of the Western Cape
- Equal Education Law Centre
- Lawyers for Human Rights
- Legal Resources Centre
- Resources Aimed at the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect
- Save the Children South Africa
- Sonke Gender Justice

### Background

#### The value of state reporting on international treaty obligations

South Africa finally submitted its report on progress in implementing the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child early in 2014 – 12 years late. Once the government report was submitted, civil society organisations could prepare and submit 'alternate' reports to the Committee.

#### Overview of the reporting process

1. Government report submitted

2. Civil society 'alternate' reports are submitted.
3. Committee holds 'pre-session' meeting with civil society.
4. Committee prepares a 'list of issues' (further questions) for the government based on the government and civil society reports.
5. Government provides written replies to the list of issues.
6. Civil society may provide additional written responses to government's replies to the list of issues.
7. The Committee hosts a session with the government delegation to engage in dialogue on the issues.
8. The Committee drafts 'Concluding Observations' (recommendations) to the government.