

TOOLKIT LAUNCH

LEVERAGING THE UN TREATY BODIES AND THE UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW TO ADDRESS CHILD, EARLY, AND FORCED MARRIAGE AND UNIONS.

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Introduction

Our session today

- Introduction
- Why does this toolkit matter and how is it structured?
- CSOs engagement with the CRC
- CSOs engagement with the UPR
- Case study
- What next?
- Q&A and closing remarks

**Why does this
toolkit matter
and how is it
structured?**

Why does this toolkit matter?

- ❖ **International legal frameworks** stress the critical importance of tackling CEFMU due to its harmful consequences for girls and women, which constitutes a violation of human rights.
- ❖ **The CRC**, does not explicitly mention child marriage, but emphasizes on the need to end harmful traditional practices affecting children's well-being, including child marriage, which violates rights such as freedom of speech, protection from harm, and right to education
- ❖ **The CEDAW** mandates nations to eliminate gender bias in marriage, ensuring equal rights to marry and freely choose a spouse, while also prohibiting child betrothal and marriage
- ❖ **The CESC**R highlights the adverse effects of early marriage on health, education, and employment rights, urging measures to protect children from social and economic exploitation

Why does this toolkit matter?

- ❖ **The UPR mechanism** has issued over 400 recommendations around CEFMU to date, underscoring the growing recognition of the urgent need to address it to safeguard the rights of girls and women.
- ❖ **Opportunities for CSOs:** Committees overseeing CRC, CEDAW, CESC, and UPR offer avenues for CSOs to participate in reviewing states' fulfilment of human rights obligations, including the ones related to CEFMU.
- ❖ **Challenges:** Accessing resources in diverse and often inaccessible formats can be challenging for CSOs working on CEFMU.
- ❖ **This toolkit was developed to facilitate CSOs' engagement with CRC, CEDAW, CESC Committees, and the UPR mechanism** to strengthen national advocacy strategies by leveraging recommendations from international human rights mechanisms.

How is the toolkit structured?

Organized in four main sections, corresponding to the CRC Committee, CEDAW Committee, CESCRC Committee, and the UPR

UN Treaty Bodies	UPR
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduction to each mechanism• Relevant articles, protocols, general comments, and recommendations for child marriage advocacy• Step-by-step guide on engaging with the reporting process• Examples of promising practices from Girls Not Brides member organizations• Guide to writing civil society organization reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Introduction to the UPR• Understanding the relationship between child marriage and the UPR• Explanation of the UPR cycle• Step-by-step guide for civil society organizations to engage with the UPR• Examples for UPR civil society organization submissions• Template for writing civil society organization reports for the UPR

The Toolkit offers a traffic light system to prioritize advocacy actions based on organizational capacity: **Highly recommended** and **Recommended**.

Suggestions are adaptable according to organization's capacity and advocacy strategies with international human rights mechanisms.

CSOs

engagement with

the CRC

The CRC: An introduction

The Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) monitors the implementation of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child, the most universally ratified convention in the world.

While the CRC does not directly address CEFMU, nearly the entire Convention is relevant to protecting children's rights from violations occurring in the context of CEFMU, such as education, health, protection from sexual abuse, the right to be heard, the right to birth registration, and the right to play, among others.

Linking the most pertinent articles for CEFMU is crucial while engaging with the CRC. They will guide CSOs in preparing their written reports and influence the process of monitoring the prevalence of CEFMU as a children's rights violations.

The CRC: An introduction

Overview of most relevant articles relevant to CEFMU

Article 2: Right to non-discrimination

Article 3: Best interest of the child

Article 6: Right to survival and development of the child

Article 7: Right to birth registration

Article 8: Right to identity

Article 12: Respect for children's views

Article 19: Right to protection from violence, abuse, and neglect

Article 24: Right to health and healthcare

Article 27: Right to an adequate standard of living

Article 28: Right to education

Article 34: Sexual exploitation and abuse

The CRC: An introduction

Overview of most relevant general comments related to CEFMU

General Comments serve as resources for CSOs in the reporting cycle as they provide additional information on how the Committees frame and interpret certain issues, such as CEFMU and related policy areas relevant under the CRC Convention. CSOs can also use General Comments for framing their reports and as advocacy tools to further influence the State.

Year	General Comments
2003	No. 4 on Adolescent Health and Development in the Context of the Convention on the Rights of the Child
2011	No. 13 on the right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence
2013	No. 15, on the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health.
2014	Joint No. 18 of the CRC and No. 31 on CEDAW on harmful practices
2016	No. 20 on the implementation of the rights of the child during adolescence
2016	No. 19, on public budgeting for the realization of children's rights
2019	Joint No. 18 of the CRC and No. 31 on CEDAW on harmful practices (revised version)

Defines child and/early marriage as a harmful practice that needs to be effectively prevented by States

The CRC: The reporting cycle

What is the CRC reporting cycle?

The CRC monitors the progress of States in fulfilling their children's human rights obligations. The reporting cycle includes:

- ❖ The review of information provided by CSOs in the country;
- ❖ A report provided by the State;
- ❖ A working group pre-session (online or in person) with invited representatives from CSOs and UN agencies;
- ❖ A session with the State representatives to review more in detail the progress and challenges of implementation. The sessions are held three times annually in Geneva, Switzerland, usually in January/February, May/June, and September/October; and
- ❖ The issue of the Committee's recommendations

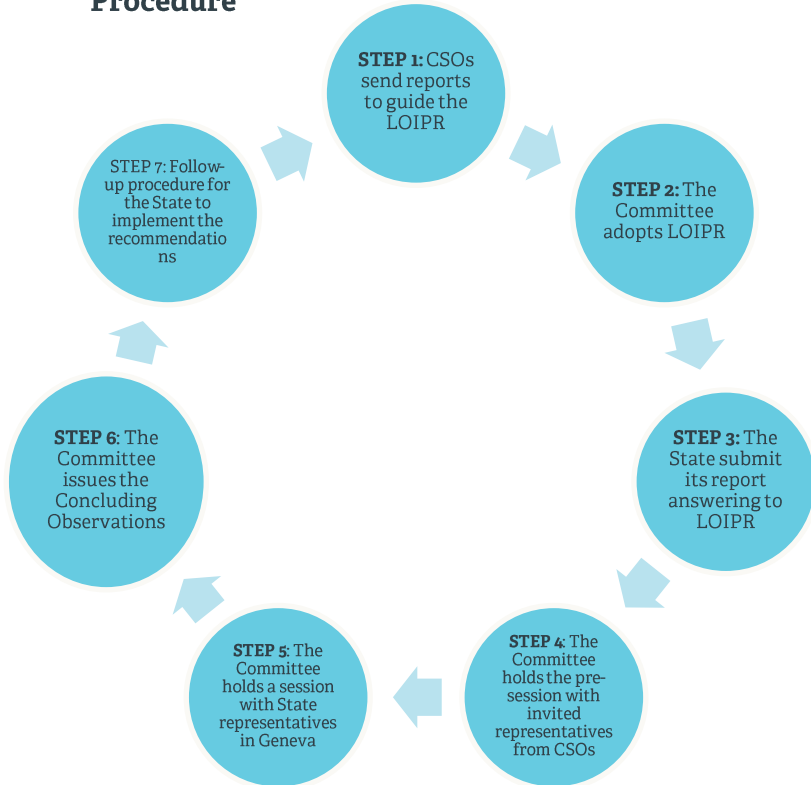
The CRC: The reporting cycle

Let's explain how the CRC reporting cycle works, but first... a few concepts!

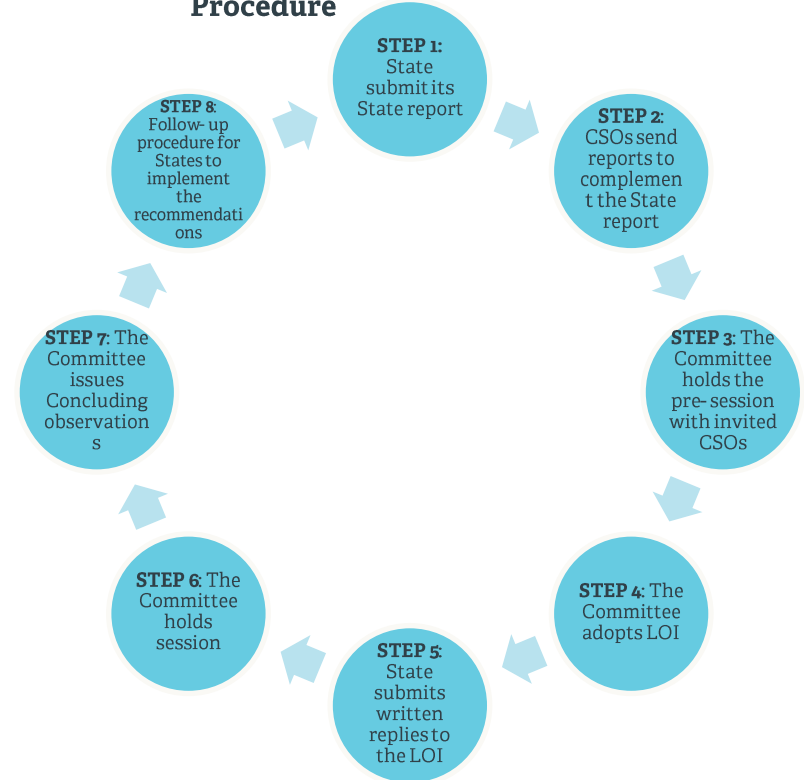
- ❖ Simplified reporting procedure vs. Standard reporting procedure
- ❖ List of Issues Prior to Reporting (LOIPR)
- ❖ Alternative report
- ❖ Pre- sessional working group or pre- session
- ❖ Concluding Observations

The CRC: The reporting cycle

The Simplified Reporting Procedure



The Standard Reporting Procedure



The CRC: The reporting cycle

Example of timeline under the standard reporting procedure: the Niger examination

NOVEMBER 2017

Niger sends State report (due in 2012)

OCTOBER 2017

CSOs send reports to LOI

MARCH 2018

The Committee adopts LOIs.

JULY 2018

Niger submits its written replies to LOI

OCTOBER 2023

Niger is requested to submit next State report

NOVEMBER 2018

The Committee issues its Concluding Observations

SEPT-OCTOBER 2018

The Committee holds the State review with Nigerien government representatives

AUGUST 2018

CSOs respond to State report (replies to LOI).

The CRC: The reporting cycle

Example of timeline under the Simplified Reporting Procedure: the Guatemala examination

JULY 2021

CSOs send reports to guide the LOIPR

OCTOBER 2021

The Committee adopts the LOIPR

OCTOBER 2023

Guatemala submits its State report (reply to LOIPR)

NOVEMBER 2023

CSOs send additional information in response to State report.

FEBRUARY 2024

The Committee holds pre-session with selected CSOs

MAY 2024

The Committee holds the State review with the Guatemalan government.

JUNE 2024

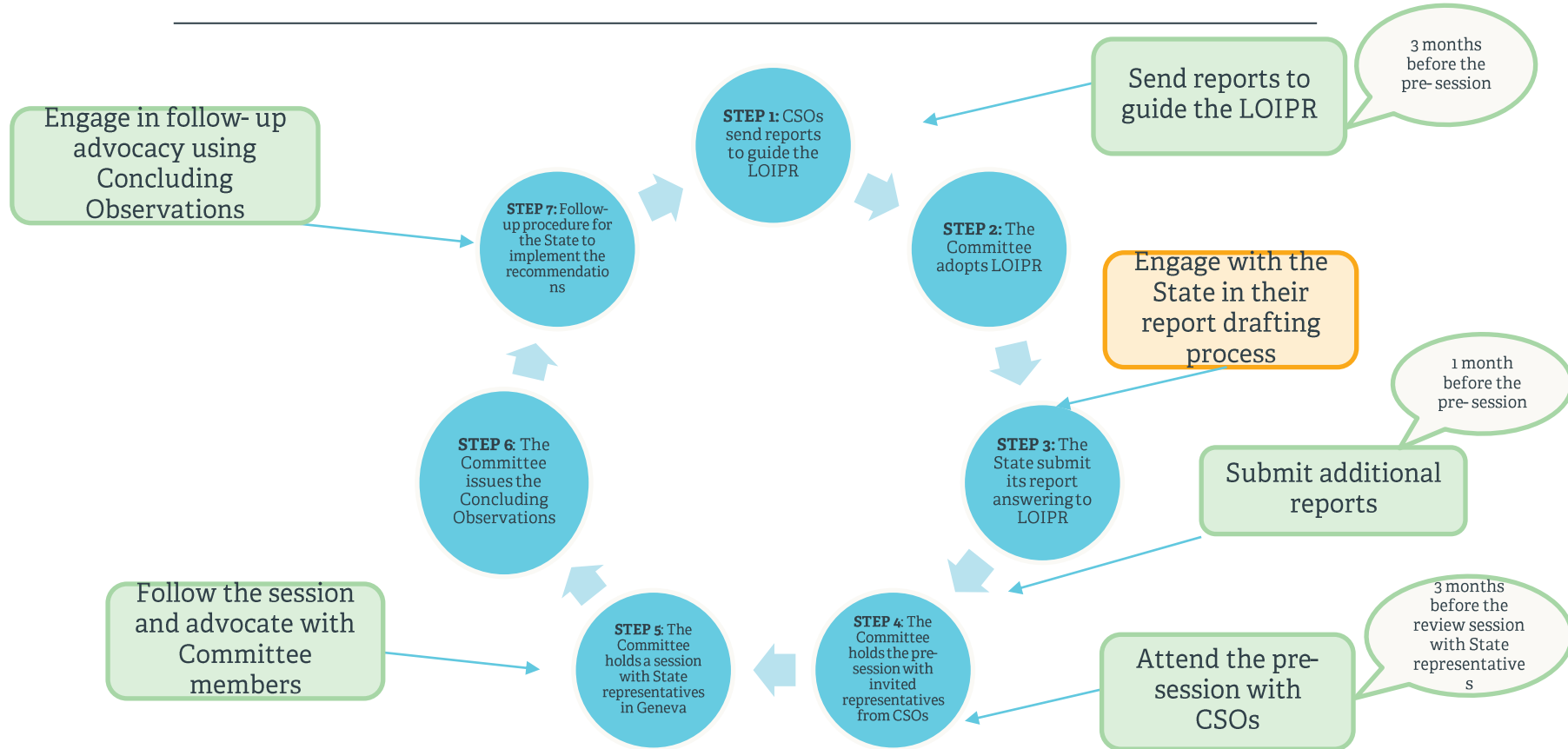
The Committee issues its Concluding Observations, including the deadline for next State report.

The CRC: Key moments for CSOs engagement

Main goals for engaging with the CRC:

- **Influence the Committee to include CEFMU in the LOIPR:** at the beginning of the cycle, ensuring that the issue is prioritized from the outset of the reporting cycle. States will then be compelled to address CEFMU in their reports, highlighting their efforts and challenges in eradicating it.
- **Influence the Committee to include CEFMU in its Concluding Observations** at the end of the cycle. This is a crucial step as it ensures that CEFMU remains on the agenda until the end of the cycle, and states receive tailored recommendations on how to address the issue effectively, which can impact policymaking and implementation.
- **Leverage the Committee recommendations in your national advocacy.** By utilizing the Committee's findings and recommendations, advocates can strengthen their advocacy efforts at the national level, pushing for meaningful reforms and policies to eliminate CEFMU. This approach maximizes the impact of international scrutiny on domestic policy agendas.

The CRC: Key moments for CSOs engagement



Before the review: Influence the LOIPR

- ❖ **Connect with [Child Rights Connect](#), an independent Geneva-based non-profit network** working to serve as a bridge between the CRC Committee and CSOs.



- ❖ **Review the scheduled State session and the provisional agenda for each session** to familiarize yourself with the information for each CRC cycle. As an example, let's check the upcoming [96 session](#).

Before the review: Influence the LOIPR

- ❖ **Send reports to influence the LOIPR**
- ❖ **Send additional reports** after the State has submitted its report and before the review session.
- ❖ **Attend the pre-session** to share information and express concerns directly to the CRC Committee

During the review: Influence the Concluding Observations

- ❖ **Participate in the State review session** in person as an observer or watch it online.
- ❖ **Advocate directly with Committee members** during breaks to inform them about your concerns regarding the State's measures in addressing CEFMU. This might influence the dialogue with the State

After the review : Focus on national advocacy

Engage in follow- up advocacy using the Concluding Observations:

- ❖ Disseminate the Concluding Observations at national and local level and translate them.
- ❖ Advocate for the implementation of the Concluding Observations with national authorities at all levels.
- ❖ Utilize the Concluding Observations as a reference for your national advocacy strategies.

The CRC: Writing a CSO report

The more alternative and rich information the Committee receive from CSOs, the greater the possibility of counterbalancing the information presented by the State

There are different types of reports:

- **Comprehensive reports** (up to 10, 000 words): Offer a broad assessment of the overall implementation of children's rights across various domains.
- **Thematic reports** (up to 3,000 words) focus on specific aspect or theme related to children's rights, such as CEFMU, providing the opportunity to delve into that particular issue.
- **Reports from children's organizations** (no Word limit)

The CRC: Writing a CSO report

Comprehensive or thematic report?

- Building partnerships and coalitions amplifies the credibility of the report and increases the likelihood that the Committee will consider the issues raised in the report in the LOIPR/LOI and the Concluding Observations.

Can children, especially girls, participate in the report?

- Children, especially girls affected by CEFMU, have unique insights into their rights and can express these through various formats. They are encouraged to submit alternative reports or contribute to reports prepared by adults.
- **Involving children and young people requires a safeguarding procedure to ensure the safety of girls and young people during engagement with the CRC.**

The CRC: Writing a CSO report

What is the ideal structure and content of a CSO report to the CRC?

a. Title page

b. Table of contents

c. Executive summary

describing main outcomes of the analysis

d. Introduction

- *Background information* mention the name of the organisation (s) / coalition that have produced the report to inform the CRC; include information about the general situation of CEFMU in the State of review and the period of analysis
- *Methodology*

e. Analysis based on clusters

- General principles (art.2,3,6,12)
- Civil rights and freedoms (art.7,8)
- Violence against children (24(3), 28(2), 34)
- Disability, basic health, and welfare (art. 6(2), art. 24, 24(3))
- Education, leisure, and cultural activities (art. 28-)

f. Targeted questions/recommendations.

- For influencing the LOIPR offer a brief list of specific questions regarding how the State is combatting CEFMU to the Committee to include in the LOIPR.
- For influencing the Concluding Observations propose a set of targeted recommendations concerning CEFMU that the Committee can discuss during the review session with State representatives and include in the Concluding Observations

The CRC: How to write a CSO report

What is the ideal structure and content of a CSO report to the CRC?

Tips for analysis

- ❖ Highlight good state practices, policies or practices regarding the elimination of CEFMU and the impact of children's rights in your country;
- ❖ Identify gaps, weaknesses and challenges in the implementation of legislation and policies or policies that may be lacking;
- ❖ For additional reports, provide comments to the State report offering your perspective by providing brief updates on the implementation of previous recommendations made by the Committee and highlight any issues that may be missing in the State report.

The CRC: How to write a CSO report

Practical information for CRC report submissions

Where to submit the report? electronically through [Child Rights Connect online platform](#);

Is there any world limit?: Up to 10,000 words for comprehensive reports and up to 3,000 words for thematic reports. Reports from children's own organizations may use alternative communication formats and have no word limit when in writing.

Language: one of the UN official languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish), but **preferably in English**.

Deadlines	Alternative reports for the adoption of the list of issues prior to reporting (LOIPR)		Additional submissions for the pre-session	
	<i>Simplified reporting procedure</i>	February pre-session	1 December	February pre-session
June pre-session		1 April	June pre-session	1 April
October pre-session		1 August	October pre-session	1 August
<i>Standard reporting procedure</i>	Alternative reports for the pre-session		Additional submissions between the PSWG and the session	
	February pre-session	1 November	January session	15 December
	June pre-session	1 March	May session	15 April
	October pre-session	1 July	September session	15 August

Q&A

CSOs

**engagement with
the UPR**

The UPR: An introduction

The Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is a process within the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) aimed at enhancing the promotion and safeguarding of all human rights globally. It reviews:

- ❖ The Charter of the United Nations;
- ❖ The Universal Declaration of Human Rights;
- ❖ Human rights instruments to which a State is party;
- ❖ Voluntary pledges and commitments made by States, including those undertaken when presenting their candidatures for election to the Human Rights Council;
- ❖ Applicable international humanitarian law.

The UPR: The reporting cycle

Let's explain how the UPR reporting cycle works, but first... a few concepts!

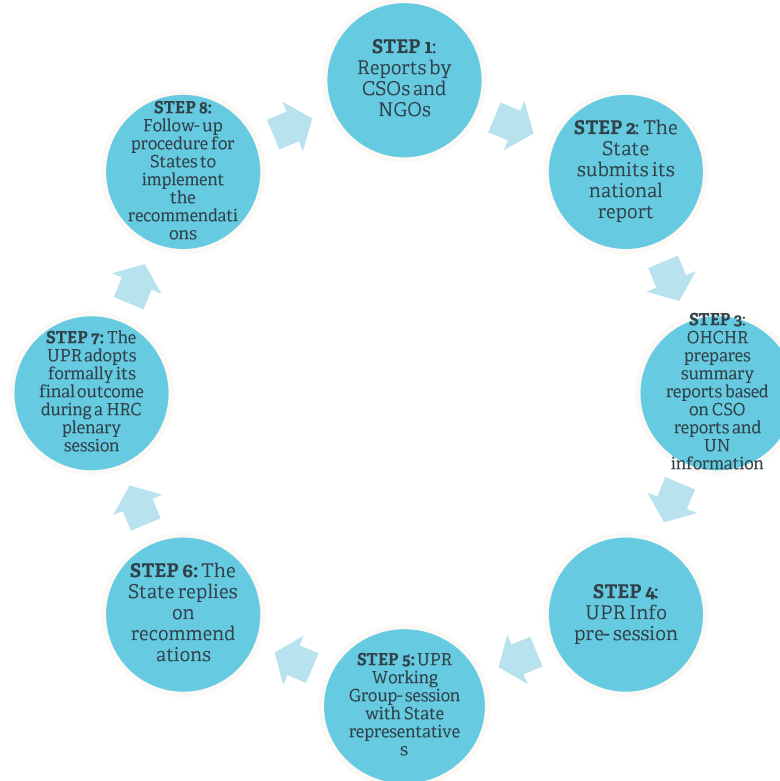
- ❖ State under Review (SuR)
- ❖ Summary reports
- ❖ UPR outcome report
- ❖ Follow- up documents
- ❖ Accepted or noted recommendations

The UPR: The reporting cycle

The UPR monitors the progress of States in fulfilling their human rights obligations. The reporting cycle includes:

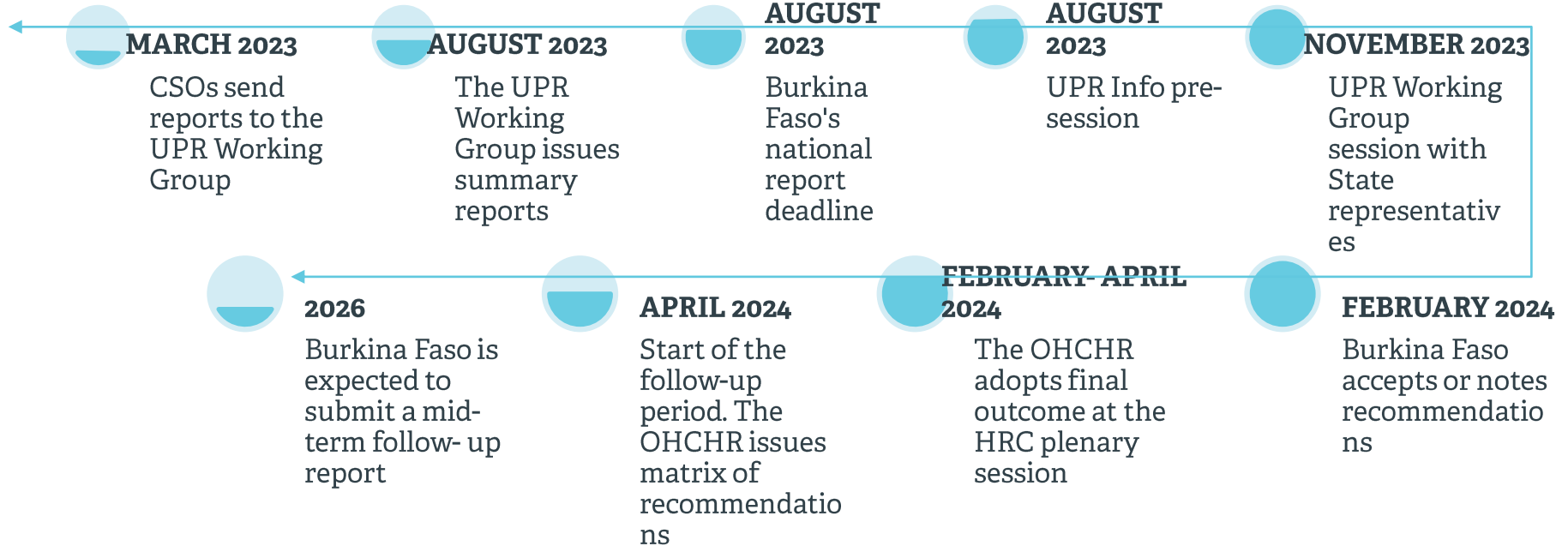
- ❖ The review of information provided by CSOs and UN agencies in the country;
- ❖ A report provided by the State;
- ❖ A UPR info pre- session (online or in person) with invited representatives from CSOs and UN agencies;
- ❖ A session with the State representatives to review more in detail the progress and challenges of implementation. The UPR Working Group meets three times a year in Geneva, typically in January, May and November;
- ❖ The issue of the UPR outcome report and follow- up documents with recommendations for human rights improvement.

The UPR: The reporting cycle



The UPR: The reporting cycle

Example of timeline for UPR: the Burkina Faso examination (4th cycle- 44 session)



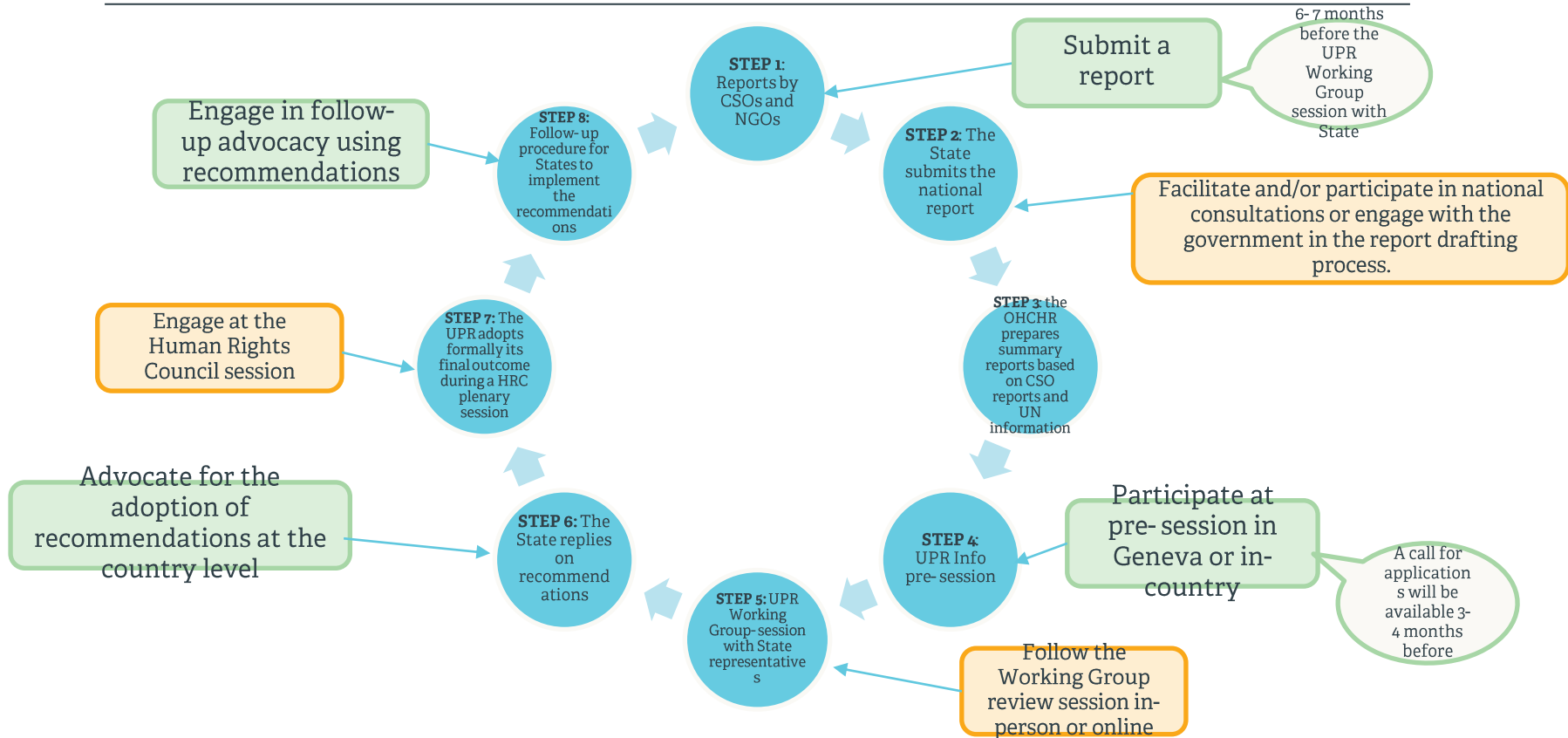
The UPR: Key moments for CSOs engagement

Although the UPR is a State-led process, CSOs play a critical role with several opportunities to influence human rights outcomes both within their countries and internationally.

The main goals of engaging with the UPR are:

- **Influence the UPR summary reports**, ensuring that addressing CEFMU is prioritized from the outset of the reporting cycle.
- **Influence the State in accepting the recommendations and the UPR final outcome report.** CSOs should continue their advocacy efforts throughout the UPR cycle to influence the final outcome and ensure specific recommendations around CEFMU.
- **Leverage the UPR recommendations in your national advocacy.** By utilizing the Committee's findings and recommendations, CSOs can strengthen their advocacy campaigns, lobby towards policymakers, and mobilize public support for meaningful changes to address CEFMU.

The UPR: The reporting cycle



Before the review: Influence the summary reports

- ❖ **Connect with UPR-info, an NGO located in Geneva, Switzerland**, which plays a pivotal role in supporting CSOs in engaging with the UPR mechanism. UPR Info's main goal is to ensure that all stakeholders can access the UPR as an effective political mechanism to advance the realisation of human rights.



- ❖ **Check the scheduled State Review and documentation provided by the UPR for each cycle.** Let's visit the [OHCHR website](#) for guidelines and submission deadlines for civil society engagement

Before the review: Influence the summary reports

- ❖ **Submit a report before the State review**
- ❖ **If selected, participate in the pre- sessions in Geneva or in-country** with representative of recommending States.

*If your organization is chosen by UPR-Info to **participate in the pre-session** there is **greater likelihood that issues related to CEFMU will be considered in the summary report**. Consequently, there is an increased probability that States will make recommendations related to CEFMU to the SuR.*

During the review: Influence the State in accepting recommendations and the UPR final outcome

- ❖ **Advocate for the adoption of recommendations at country level:**
During the period between UPR Working Group sessions and the HRC outcome (typically 4 to 6 months), CSOs can advocate for the adoption and implementation of crucial recommendations regarding CEFMU by the State under Review.

TIP. Develop advocacy factsheets!

- Explain what CSOs have found in their reports about CEFMU in the country being reviewed and the prevalence of CEFMU is in that country and the progress made, challenges faced to address it, and SMART recommendations.
- Great opportunity to show how CEFMU intersect with other issues such as education and sexual and reproductive rights.
 - Example of factsheet on [child marriage](#) in Bangladesh

After the review: Use recommendations for national advocacy

- ❖ **Advocate for and support the implementation of UPR recommendations.**
- ❖ **Submit a mid-term report on the status of implementation of UPR recommendations.** CSOs working on issues related to CEFMU and submitting a mid-term report should use the matrix of recommendations and indicate the status of the relevant recommendations for their advocacy strategy using three categories:
 - Fully implemented
 - Partially implemented
 - Not implemented

The UPR: how to write a CSO report

Suggested template for UPR submissions

a. Cover page

- Civil society submissions to the UPR cannot be confidential: Assess whether there might be a risk of reprisals!

b. Introduction: briefly introduce the organisation(s) making the submission and the scope of the report, focusing on 5-10 key human rights issues identified during the reporting period, such as human rights violations related to CEFMU (Please refer to the chapters on CRC, CEDAW, and CESCRC for a review of the relevant treaty articles and human rights violations associated with CEFMU).

c. Methodology: priority will be given to first-hand information.

d. Content clustered by key human rights. For each human rights issue identified:

- Recommendations

e. Annex

The UPR: how to write a CSO report

Suggested template for UPR submissions

Annex

UPR of Paraguay (3rd Cycle - 38th Session)		Thematic list of recommendations		Page 1 of 53
Recommendation	Position	Full list of themes	Assessment/comments on level of implementation	
Theme: Ratification of & accession to international instruments				
118.1 Ratify the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Bahamas) (Costa Rica) (France) (Mongolia); Source of Position: A/HRC/48/9/Add.1 - Para.6	Supported	- Ratification of & accession to international instruments - Economic, social & cultural rights - general measures of implementation SDGs: - 16 - PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS Affected persons: - Persons living in poverty		
118.2 Consider the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Morocco); Consider ratifying the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Niger); Source of Position: A/HRC/48/9/Add.1 - Para.6	Supported	- Ratification of & accession to international instruments - Economic, social & cultural rights - general measures of implementation SDGs: - 16 - PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS Affected persons: - Persons living in poverty		
118.6 Ratify the Convention against Discrimination in Education 1960 (Mauritius) (Rwanda); Source of Position: A/HRC/48/9/Add.1 - Para.8	Supported	- Ratification of & accession to international instruments - Right to education SDGs: - 16 - PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS Affected persons: - Children		

The UPR: how to write a CSO report

Suggested template for UPR submissions

Tips for analysis:

- Offer a concise definition and contextual background of the situation of human rights in your country, incorporating the State's achievements and challenges.
- Support your arguments by including facts, evidence relevant to the priority issues and referencing relevant human rights instruments and national legal frameworks.
- Provide an analysis of the implementation status of relevant recommendations from previous UPR cycles highlighting any progress, regressions, or best practices observed, categorizing recommendations as
 - "fully implemented,"
 - "partially implemented,"
 - "in process," or "not implemented"

The UPR: how to write a CSO report

Joint or individual reports?

- Joint submissions offer increased visibility and credibility, resource pooling, and enhanced cooperation among CSOs and are more likely to be reflected in the summary reports.
- CSOs can engage in both types of submissions and should decide based on effectiveness in communicating their concerns, their resources and advocacy strategies

Can children, especially girls, participate in the UPR reporting process?

- Children can participate in the UPR process.
- **Involving children and young people in these processes requires a safeguarding procedure, always ensuring their safety during engagement with these mechanisms.**
- [The child-friendly manual The UPR & Me: My Guide to Participating in the UPR developed by the CRC and UPR Info in 2020](#) serves as a resource to guide children through the UPR cycle.

The UPR: how to write a CSO report

Practical information for UPR report submission

Submission guidelines: send in **Word document format** through the online [UPR submissions registration system](#). You will be requested to create an organizational profile in the system. If you encounter any technical issues, send an email to UPR submissions at ohchr-uprsubmissions@un.org

Word limit: Individual written submissions **must not exceed 2815 words** (additional documentation can be annexed for reference). Joint submissions **must not exceed 5630 words**. The cover page, endnotes and annexes will not be counted within the word/page limits of contributions.

Language: one of the UN official languages (Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish), but **preferably in English, French or Spanish**.

Deadlines: submissions should be sent **at least six months before** the relevant Working Group session (State Review) The exact deadlines will be posted on the [OHCHR UPR website](#). Late submissions will not be considered.

Where to find the UPR reports? [OHCHR website- UPR \(Documentation by country > Reports and information > Summary of stakeholders' information](#)

Check the guidelines

- ❖ [The technical guidelines for stakeholders submissions](#)
- ❖ [Guidelines for the use of the online UPR submissions platform](#) .

Q&A

Case study

Paraguay

Case study Nepal

What's next?

States under CRC review 2024

15 Jan-2 Feb
2024

- Bulgaria
- Congo
- Lithuania
- Russia
- Senegal
- South Africa

6-24 May 2024

- Bhutan
- Egypt
- Estonia
- Georgia
- Guatemala
- Mali
- Namibia
- Paraguay

26 Aug-13 Sep
2024

- Armenia
- Ecuador
- Eritrea
- Honduras
- Israel
- Mexico
- Slovakia
- Turkmenistan

States under CEDAW review 2024

29 Jan-16 Feb 2024

- Central African Republic
- Democratic Republic of the Congo
- Djibouti
- Greece
- Italy
- Niger
- Oman
- Tajikistan,
- Turkmenistan

13-31 May 2024

- Brazil
- Estonia
- Kuwait
- Malaysia
- Montenegro
- Rep. of Korea
- Rwanda
- Singapore

7-25 Oct 2024

- Benin
- Canada
- Chile
- Cuba
- Japan
- Lao PDR
- Netherlands
- New Zealand
- Saudi Arabia

States under CESCR review 2024

12 Feb-1 March 2024

- Indonesia
- Iraq
- Ireland
- Mauritania
- Romania
- Sweden

9-27 Sep 2024 (TBC)

- Albania
- Cyprus
- Honduras
- Iceland
- Kyrgyzstan
- Malawi
- Poland

States under UPR 2024

Jan-Feb 2024

Saudi Arabia, Senegal, China, Nigeria, Mexico, Mauritius, Jordan, Malaysia, Central African Republic, Monaco, Belize, Chad, Congo, Malta

Apr – May 2024

New Zealand, Afghanistan, Chile, Viet Nam, Uruguay, Yemen, Vanuatu, Republic of North Macedonia, Comoros, Slovakia, Eritrea, Cyprus, Dominican Republic, Cambodia

Oct - Nov 2024

Norway, Albania, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Côte d'Ivoire, Portugal, Bhutan, Dominica, Democratic People's Republic of Korea, Brunei Darussalam, Costa Rica, Equatorial Guinea, Ethiopia, Qatar, Nicaragua

Q&A

Get in touch!

If you have any questions or need support in using this toolkit, reach out to the Girls Not Brides secretariat at Sophia.Lane@girlsnotbrides.org. Write “UN Treaty Bodies/UPR toolkit” in the subject line.

If you spot any inaccuracies or mistakes, or would like to share any insights from your advocacy work, please let us know! We value continuous improvement and embrace an inclusive approach to shared learning. Your feedback is essential in ensuring the quality and effectiveness of our collective work.



GIRLS NOT BRIDES

The Global Partnership
to End Child Marriage

THANK YOU!

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