

“Together we can do better for Children of Seychelles.”

Seychelles Alternative Report to the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child.



*Submitted by a group of NGO
Representatives.*

March 2011

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

AG	Attorney General
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
APSHF	Association for the Promotion of Solid and Humane Families
ARH	Adolescent Reproductive Health
ASFF	Alliance of Solidarity for the Family
COI	Commission de L'Océan Indien
CRC	Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DAC	Drug and Alcohol Council
FBO	Faith based Organisation
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
LUNGOS	Liaison Unit for Non-Governmental Organisation
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MESA	Ministry of Employment and Social Affairs
NCC	National Council for Children
NCCP	National Commission for Child Protection
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
SNPAC	Seychelles National Plan of Action for Children
NSB	National Statistics Bureau
ODEROI	Observatoire des Droits de l'Enfant de la Région Océan Indien
OHCHR	Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
PoA	Plan of Action
RIF	Risk Indicator Framework
SEP	Special Education Programme
SAWOP	Seychelles Association of Women Professionals
TOR	Terms of Reference
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
YHC	Youth Health Centre
YRTC	Youth Rehabilitation Training Centre

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Introduction

1. The CRC Alternative Report has been prepared following three consultative meetings/workshops held on the 18th and 26th of January and 21st February 2011 with a group of representatives from fourteen Non- Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and Faith Based Organisations (FBOs) who work closely with children and who have a special interest in promoting and safeguarding the rights of children in Seychelles. (A description of the NGOs and their scope of work are attached in the appendix.) NGOs were invited to submit an alternative report by the NGO Group for the CRC based in Geneva.
2. Copies of the State Party Report (Combined second, third and fourth periodic reports) submitted to the UN in July 2009 and the Committee's concluding observations on the initial report were circulated to all participants prior to the meetings. The Concluding Observations of the UN Committee (CRC/C/SR.833), adopted at its 833rd meeting held on 4th October 2002 after consideration of Seychelles' initial report (CRC/C/3/Add.64), was the main document used during the workshops/meetings. Participants were invited to comment on how far the committee's recommendations had been successfully implemented and to raise issues of concern.
3. Discussions were relaxed and open and conducted both in informal groups and plenary sessions. The views expressed in the report are the collective views of the participants who took part in the workshop. In view of the tight time lines for the submission of the report, (2 months) it was not possible to conduct any further research or interviews with stakeholders except to rely on the 'lived' experiences of the representatives who attended the workshop and their reflections on the state party report. A focus group discussion was held with children on the 27th January 2011. A report is attached.
4. A copy of the draft alternative report was discussed with the participants at a meeting on the 28th March 2011 and additional suggestions incorporated.
5. Members of the working group recognized Seychelles Government's commitment to children and the many steps taken to improve the health and well-being of children in Seychelles. It was also appreciative of the steps taken to build stronger relationships with civil society and engage their participation in the advancement of children. The excellent health, education and wellbeing indicators are a testimony to the work of government as well as the many NGOs who over the years have continued to work steadfastly for children in spite of limited resources, personnel and voice in decision making.

6. In spite of this success, it is the firm conviction of the group that much more can be achieved for children in Seychelles with more focused and transparent leadership, sustained commitment, trust in the NGO community, and more effective monitoring and evaluation processes. Many excellent initiatives and action plans are not followed through and collapse because of poor planning, coordination and limited implementation capacity.
7. The bottlenecks and long delays in the implementation of decisions are a source of continued frustration for the NGOs who fail to understand the 'inaction' on certain important issues affecting the well-being of children. This frustration is further compounded by the attitude of some duty bearers who are reluctant to provide civil society with appropriate and reliable information on the state of affairs. Examples of the above are provided throughout the report.
8. NGOs also believe that a lot more can be done for the promotion of children's rights. Children's rights are frequently blamed for poor discipline in schools and parents' and teachers' loss of control over the children. These attitudes are not sufficiently challenged by the authorities. Strong and courageous leadership will instill more confidence in parents and the public at large.
9. The recommendations in this report are made in the spirit of cooperation and the earnest desire to continue to work with government to do even better for the children of Seychelles. The NGO group is fully aware of the numerous constraints such as lack of skilled personnel, limited resources and instability caused by frequent staff turnover in Ministries in small developing countries like Seychelles. The NGO group is however concerned that not enough is done to leverage the strengths of small states to bring about the desired changes. These are factors such as the small size of the 0-18 population, which stands at 25,276 and which represent 29.2% of the total population of the country (according to the preliminary findings of the 2010 census report), intimate knowledge of the local situation, and personal relationships.

Section 1: General comments on the Combined second, third and fourth periodic reports of State Party

10. In view of the time limits, areas of expertise of NGO representation at the meetings, and the lack of information and data to comment knowledgeably on all issues raised in the report, this alternative report does not strictly conform to reporting guidelines established by OHCHR. Section 1 raises some general concerns about the overall content and style of the country report. Section 2 gives some examples of concerns relevant to specific recommendations of the report.
11. The Seychelles CRC report is an eloquent description and listing of numerous initiatives, action plans and activities launched and carried out for and on behalf of children by the Government of Seychelles from the period 1997 to 2007. Although NGOs acknowledge that these activities have for the most part been initiated, often with the participation of the NGO community, NGOs are concerned that the report does not provide clear evidence of the progress made in the implementation of the Convention from 1997 onwards and mentions very few concrete outcomes in response to the UN Committee's recommendations.
12. The over generalization and co-opting of activities not strictly relevant to the implementation of the recommendations detracts from the main purpose of the report – to provide reliable evidence of advancements made by children in the enjoyment of their rights.
13. The report has a number of weaknesses and is a reflection of the ad hoc and sporadic manner in which Government has implemented the many recommendations.
 - a) It is overwhelmingly descriptive in nature with very little statistical evidence or impact assessments of measures adopted by Government. Consequently it is difficult to ascertain how children have benefited from the implementation of the numerous activities undertaken.
 - b) The report does not contain any statistics on child abuse and neglect, disabled children, children involved in drugs, school drop-outs or other vulnerable groups of children. The statistics presented in the report are population and health statistics derived from general census reports.
 - c) The report goes into great detail of terms of reference of numerous committees and structures set up to address issues such as child protection but fails to show how these structures or the work of the committees have impacted positively on children. A number of these committees/structures such as NCCP, ODEROI (local Chapter) are inactive because of poor attention to long term sustainability concerns such as funding, membership and research capacity.

- d) Action Plans such as the Action Plan on Children mentioned in the report (p8 para 18) are not supported by measurable targets, budget lines, clear responsibilities and monitoring and evaluation frameworks. NGOs are not aware of any evaluation plans that have been produced as mentioned in the report (para 18).
- e) The report makes frequent reference to guidelines and policies which have been implemented. There is no evidence to show that the policies have been satisfactorily implemented. In the case of at least one policy, the nutrition policy, NGO members are aware that because of staff shortages and unclear responsibilities for monitoring and evaluation of this particular policy, it is not being effectively implemented or monitored in schools. There is no evidence to show that the policy has helped to reduce obesity in children.
- f) There are too many areas on which Government remains silent indicating that no action has been taken since the First Report. No explanations are forthcoming.
- g) The report acknowledges the slow pace of legislative changes without proposing new timelines. It is unacceptable that important pieces of legislation are still under consideration after eleven years.
- h) Reasons given for inaction on major issues are not convincing. There is not enough dialogue with stakeholders on what are the major constraints facing government. There is not enough transparency on what are the major points of contention. Better cooperation and frank acknowledgement of the problems would expedite action.
- i) The concluding remarks and recommendations at the end of each section while highly auto-critical are presented in very general terms and in a semi apologetic tone with no clear indication of how government intends to move forward on the various recommendations. Recommendations couched in terms such as *Measures must be taken to ensure that highly trained specialists remain at the rehabilitation centre* (Para 240) or *laws need to be monitored to verify implementation as the practice of sending children to buy alcohol and cigarettes for adults is still rampant* (para 66b.) are destabilizing to the NGO community who would like to see Government address challenges boldly by prioritizing, setting clear time frames and allocating funding for the various activities that need implementation and monitoring. In the report they read as recommendations made to Government by the consultant leaving the reader very perplexed as to government's position and responsibility on major issues.

Section 2: Working Group's reaction/observations on the Committee's List of Recommendations

1. General Measures of Implementation.

Recommendation (8): Legislation

The Committee encourages the State Party to continue its efforts at legislative reform and take all necessary measures to ensure that its domestic legislation in all areas concerning children conforms fully to the principles and provisions of the Convention.

NGO Comments:

Comment 1: The NGO group remains concerned that in spite of some amendments to the Penal Code and the Children Act, certain important pieces of legislation such as the minimum of marriage for boys and girls and the discrepancy between the ages at which a young person can legally consent to sex and the age at which he or she can be prescribed contraceptives and other reproductive health services, which have been under discussion for over ten years, have still not been amended. Government itself recognizes the injustices inherent in the laws. In relation to the inconsistency between the age of consent and age of access to reproductive health services, the State Party Report (para 350. P. 59) notes that

*'inconsistencies in relation to some laws and policies make it difficult to manage or even delay access to services resulting in **deprivation** of the young person his/her **right to access** medical services.'*

The Seychelles Millennium Development Goal Report 2010 notes that

"There is a need to once and for all to finalise and harmonise policies on access to contraceptives, age of consent for sexual relationships, public health issues and parental roles in adolescent reproductive health matters. While the situation is allowed to remain in limbo, with indecisions and hesitations on all sides, adolescent girls and boys begin sexual relationships without informing their parents and then go without contraceptives, leading to unwanted pregnancies, abortions not conducted in medical settings and supervision and the beginnings of protracted cycle of poor health and educational outcomes, as well as poverty for her and her children.

There is a further need to recognize that adolescent reproductive health needs differ significantly from that of adults. More youth-friendly decentralized services are urgently required to move away from the reliance on the Youth Health Centre, located on Mahé. Access to services is a key factor." MDG 2010 Report, p. 85.

In the light of government's consternation and critical evaluation of the situation as noted in the two reports, the working group remains perplexed as to what is holding the government back from amending the laws. During the process of report writing, numerous efforts were made to contact the Attorney General's office for concrete feedback without success. Eleven years is a long time for a piece of legislation to be under consideration!!!

The State Party Report remains silent or does not state in clear terms and giving clear time frames what government intends to do about the situation. Consequently the situation will continue to be in limbo with serious consequences for adolescents who come from dysfunctional families and who are in most need of the services.

NGOs are aware that the Attorney General's office has been plagued by serious staffing problems including the shortage of legal draftsmen. In recent years many young Seychellois have resigned from AG's office to seek employment in the private sector. Many retired legal draftsmen recruited from overseas are unfamiliar with the socio cultural environment and sometimes not pro children's rights. It is perhaps one reason for the low priority given to legislation concerning children.

Comment 2: Many working groups have been formed and workshops conducted where these issues have been brought to the fore and recommendations made. The only problem is that these same recommendations are those that have been made every single year for the past 11 years. No concrete action is taken, apart from more workshops. The focus is always on doing more sensitisation campaigns on audiovisual media and in the written press. Laws are applied unevenly or not at all. In some cases, there is a burst of frenetic activity usually close to celebration of International Days, then all dies out quietly.

Comment 3: NGO's acknowledge that the setting up of the Family Tribunal mentioned in the state report (para 14, 15) has had beneficial outcomes such as reduced waiting time and trauma for families concerned, but feels that more efforts could be made to make the austere premises of the Family Tribunal more child friendly. The Family Tribunal is currently housed in very cramped and crowded premises with no privacy. Deliberations are conducted in the presence of other clients. Many criticisms have in the past been leveled at the overbearing and authoritative attitude of the Chair and the intimidating behaviour of some lawyers towards children. Secondly, although statistics quoted in the report are impressive, a more thorough analysis would also help to reveal how many of the 18,696 cases dealt with by the Family Tribunal over the last four years have been satisfactorily resolved in the 'best interest of the child.' Such evaluations are currently missing.

NGO Recommendations

- A. NGOs would like Government to state its stand on the above pieces of legislation clearly. Civil Society and NGOs need to be well briefed on the situation re legislation

and the constraints faced by government in order to work collaboratively in the best interest of the child. Duty bearers must be advised to respond to requests for information in an open and transparent manner.

- B. Government must be urged to train more Seychellois legal draftsmen/women who have adequate knowledge of human rights instruments and are sensitive to the socio cultural aspects of our society. More efforts must be made to retain qualified staff.
- C. Government must also be urged to conduct an independent evaluation of the impact of the judgements/resolutions of the family tribunal in the best interest of the child.

Recommendation (10): Coordination

The Committee recommends that the state party strengthen its efforts to coordinate policy and programmes to ensure a holistic approach to children's issues both at the national and local levels in particular by ensuring that coordination mechanisms receive the necessary financial and human resources.

Comment 1: The working group recognizes that a number of committees such as the National Commission for Child Protection, Inter Agency Committee, Advisory Committee on Childrens' Home etc as noted in the State Party Report (para 7, p. 8) have been set up for coordination purposes but notes that this has not resulted in streamlining processes and expediting decisions.

The National Commission for Child Protection (NCCP) is broad based and has high level representation from ministries and agencies involved in child protection. It met 4 times during 2007, (January March, May and July) twice during 2008 (August and December) and twice during 2009 (April and August). An analysis of the minutes reveals that the same items appear on the agenda (review of legislation, video links, independent monitoring structures etc) over and over again and while debates are lively, decisions are frequently inconclusive.

The large size of the Committee (over 24 members) and the infrequent meetings do not help to move the agenda forward in a satisfactory manner. This is in spite of its transformation into a statutory body in 2005. A number of excellent reports and analysis of the factors impeding interagency cooperation (October 2002) have been presented to the Committee by the Ministry of Health, NCC and Social services in the last ten years. Although the recommendations are endorsed by the NCCP, the minutes do not provide evidence of concrete action taken to remedy the situation and accountability procedures are unclear.

Current functions of the Commission are to advise the minister on matters of policy related to child protection, to recommend policies and procedures for the review and coordination of activities of various bodies concerned with child protection, and to inquire into and report or advise on matters referred to it by the Minister. As an advisory body, the committee is unable to take members to task for non -delivery of assigned activities.

Membership on the interagency committee is skewed in favour of the Social Development Department. Meetings are frequently unproductive because of poor attendance.

Comment 2: NGOs are aware that the Social Development Division is understaffed and under financed and has limited resources such as transport facilities to carry out its work effectively. Research capacity is weak. At least 4 trained and experienced researchers have resigned in the last five years. These constraints are frequently brought up in interagency meetings when NGO members are present. It is difficult to see how the Division can act as government's think tank (p9) or fulfill its mandate under these circumstances.

Comment 3: The National Plan of Action for Children 2005-2009 (para 18) mentioned is not supported by a monitoring and evaluation framework or a budget. Responsibility for implementation is shared out amongst various ministries and stakeholders with no clear lines of accountability. NGOs are unsure how many of the 20 goals have been implemented and with what results. No evaluation reports have been circulated by NCCP as mentioned in the report.

Comment 4: The **Child well being study** (Para 20) which was started in 2005 has indeed generated an impressive amount of raw data through its first report published in 2009. This initial report was to be followed by a second analytical report to identify issues relevant to child protection and well-being. It is disappointing to note that this report has to date not been produced. The study's potential for influencing policy and interventions is therefore currently limited. Social development staff mentions the lack of research capacity and funds to complete the work.

Comment 5: The Risk Indicator Framework (RIF) mentioned in (para 19) is not being used consistently by all agencies because of lack of monitoring and issues of ownership. The Ministry of Health and the Police reported problems with its implementation. It appears that the RIF is currently being used by Social workers only who have integrated elements of the instrument into their procedures.

NGO Recommendation

- A. Review the membership and TOR of the NCCP to make it more manageable and action oriented. There is a need for the Commission to take a broader view of children's issues which are interlinked. An exclusive focus on child protection will not ensure a holistic approach to children's issues and will not necessarily enlist the support and commitment of other ministries and departments such as education, health, police and community development. Reporting and accountability issues need to be reinforced. The recent development of an Early Childhood Care and Education Policy and Framework with support from UNESCO is a move in the right direction.

The policy will address issues of child health, education and protection in a more holistic manner and engage commitment of all major stakeholders.

- B. Increase funding and staffing for the Social Development Division to enable it to carry out its mandate satisfactorily.
- C. Conduct second part of child wellbeing study.

Recommendation (12): Independent Monitoring Structures.

The committee encourages the state party to pursue its efforts to develop and establish an independent and effective mechanism provided with adequate human and financial resources and easily accessible to children in accordance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles that would

- (a) Monitor the implementation of the Convention*
- (b) Deal with complaints from children in a child-sensitive and expeditious manner*
- (c) Provide remedies for violations of the rights under the Convention.*

Comment 1: The State Party Report describes the establishment of the Office of a Children's Commissioner and goes into details of the proposed functions of the office as if a 'fait-accompli'. (para 26). The working group regrets to note that although decisions regarding the establishment of a Commissioner have been approved since 2005, no such Act has been drawn up or tabled in the Assembly. As at February 2011, this position has not been created. Again NGOs who have been involved in the numerous discussions leading to the establishment of an independent monitoring body continue to remain in the dark as to the reasons for this long delay.

Comment 2: NGO's are of the opinion that the office of the Ombudsman and the newly created Human Rights Commission are largely reactive and do not address the needs of children. Children do not approach these institutions.

NGO Recommendations

- A. Review decisions regarding the establishment of a Children's Commissioner in view of the big time lapse and the changing situation of human rights in the country.
- B. Establish a Children Rights Commission which would include members of NGOs working with children. This set up will provide more balanced consideration of children's problems.

Recommendation (14): Allocation of budgetary resources.

While recognizing the existing economic difficulties, the committee encourages the state party to pay particular attention to the full implementation of Article 4 of the convention by prioritizing their budgetary allocations to ensure implementation of economic, social and cultural rights of children to the maximum extent of... available funds. Furthermore the committee recommends that the state party undertake an evaluation of spending and resources in the public and private sectors including by NGOs to assess the cost, accessibility, quality and effectiveness of services for children.

Comment 1: As noted in the State party report, (para 33), it is currently difficult to extract information on budget allocations for children because of the way budgets are constructed. This situation has not changed since the first report. The claim of increased allocations for children and family programmes is not supported by figures or other evidence.

NGO Recommendations

- A. Urge government to take action on recommendations which are still outstanding
- B. Adopt more transparency in allocation of monies dedicated to children.

Recommendation (16): Data collection

- a. *Develop a system of data collection and indicators consistent with the Convention , disaggregated by gender and age as well as by island. This system should cover all children up to the age of 18 years, with specific emphasis on those who are particularly vulnerable including child victims of abuse, neglect or ill treatment, children with disabilities, children in conflict with the law and children living in poverty.*
- b. *Use these indicators and data for the formulation and evaluation of policies and programmes for the effective implementation of the Convention.*

Comment 1: The Indian Ocean Observatory (ODEROI) mentioned in the report Para 24 and 25 has produced 3 reports on adolescents, violence, and migration which compares Seychelles with other countries in the Indian Ocean. It has also trained local staff in the collection and management of data related to children. Although an excellent initiative, the future of the organization is now unsure. UNICEF and the University of Mauritius have pulled out of the project because of lack of funds and other logistical issues.

Comment 2: In spite of staff training, it is still difficult for NGOs to obtain reliable, disaggregated and updated statistics on children (esp child protection). It is difficult for NGOs to plan interventions or develop projects without reliable statistics and government staff is often reluctant to release statistics without written permission often from the Principal Secretary. Although a number of local staff have been trained in data management, there is great loss of skills due to high turnover of trained statisticians.

NGO Recommendation

- a. Urge Government to exercise more transparency and trust in dissemination of statistics
- b. Build capacity of NGOs to conduct independent research
- c. Disseminate information on the future of the Indian Ocean Observatory and government's commitment to the project.

Recommendation (18): Dissemination

The State party strengthens its efforts to ensure that the principles and provisions of the Convention are widely known and understood by adults and children alike. In this regard the committee encourages the State Party to

- a) Ensure the Convention is translated in its entirety into all three official languages*
- b) To undertake a systematic education and training programme on the principles and provisions of the Convention*

Comment 1: The CRC is the one Human Rights Convention that has been the most widely disseminated in Seychelles. It is also the Human Rights Convention most often cited by participants in a baseline study to gauge the levels of awareness and understanding of human rights in Seychelles conducted by Dr. Michel Rosalie in 2008 as part of the EU project on Human Rights.

In spite of the training and sensitization, there is still a lot of misconception about children's rights. Many parents and the general public still believe that teaching children about their rights undermines parental authority. 'NCC in aras nou baton- in pran nou roten' (NCC has snatched away our stick - it has taken away our punishment cane.) Although this may be a normal reaction on the part of parents and uninformed members of the public, this view is not sufficiently challenged by the authorities. Children's rights have been held responsible for deterioration in discipline at school, in the home, in society, in public meetings and church sermons. Remaining silent or overtly insisting on the responsibilities of the children detracts from the spirit of the Convention and does not help to push the children's rights agenda forward.

Comment 2: The concept of childhood is also not understood by many segments of the population. Children are still seen as possessions. When parents are reprimanded for mistreating their children, they say "let NCC or Social Services take their children and look after them."

Comment 3: The focus group discussion with a group of 15 secondary students held on 27th January 2011 revealed that the students have very elementary knowledge of the CRC (see

appendix) and are unsure of the services put in place to protect them. Teaching children about the CRC has been incorporated into the Personal and Social Education Programme in Schools.

NGO Recommendation

- a) Conduct a national survey among school children to gauge level of awareness of CRC after 17 years of dissemination efforts
- b) Review methodology and channels for dissemination of CRC among adolescents using new technology
- c) Ensure that all schools are child friendly institutions
- d) Ensure that all family and parenting policies and programmes are compliant with the CRC

Recommendation (20): Cooperation with Civil Society

The committee recommends that the State party continue to involve systematically communities and other elements of the civil society including children's associations throughout all stages of the implementation of the Convention including the formulation of policies and programmes and in the drafting of the next report to the committee.

Comment 1: At the time of writing this report, the state party report and the committee's concluding remarks were not posted on the government website. Copies were retrieved from the OHCHR website.

Comment 2: Some NGO representatives feel that although they are invited to meetings, their views and suggestions are not always taken seriously and not incorporated into the final report.

Comment 3: Participants feel that there is a need to understand the true meaning of *involvement* and be sincere about listening to children's views. Children should not be used to rubber stamp decisions taken on behalf of them and not always by the children themselves. Children have to be sincerely listened to and their views taken into account continuously and opportunities provided for them to do so at school, in extra curricular activities, clubs etc. Inviting children to attend one off meetings or high profile launchings does not constitute *real* involvement. Good initiatives need to be followed up on and budgeted for.

Students committees at school level are not very effective as reported by the students themselves. (See report in appendix).

Comment 4: The Country does not have a proper system with clear responsibilities and budget provision for treaty writing and reporting. Individual ministries take on responsibility

for writing or commissioning reports according to their mandate. Consequently, there are insufficient funds available for wide dissemination of the reports.

NGO Recommendation

- a. Set up a national coordinating body with adequate funding for treaty writing and dissemination
- b. Use modern technology (social networks) to involve wider groups of children
- c. Train CEOs and civil servants in how to engage constructively with civil society.

6. Basic Health and Welfare

Recommendation (45): Children with disabilities.

Comment 1: The report does not differentiate between different types of disabilities. All people with disabilities are put in one basket and it is felt that the report is not sensitive enough to the needs of the different types of disabilities. E.g. ‘accessibility’ for deaf is not the same as that for the physically disabled. Deaf children need a special school, trained teachers etc. not ramps.

Comment 2: The Council for the Disabled works closely with Government and since 2009 has been installing ramps in public places and conducting workshops to educate and sensitise the public. However it was noted that the Council for the Disabled is appointed by the Minister for Social Development. Some members have been on the Council for many years and are not receptive to new ideas and developments. Members have full time jobs and do not have the necessary time to devote to the disabled. They need to be given time off to consult with associations and participate in activities. Associations are not very proactive and advocacy is weak.

Comment 3: There is no accurate database of people/children with disabilities. The new Census 2010 has collected data which can be used as baseline. Where data is available, it is difficult for the Council and Associations to access this information because of reluctance to release information.

Comment 4: It is not clear what is happening to children with disabilities on Praslin and La Digue. The Day Care Centre at Baie St Anne is not operational and represents a missed opportunity for children. Since the closure of the rehabilitation centre at North East Point on Mahe in 2008, rehabilitation Services have been decentralised in the districts. It is not clear what services are currently available for children and how they are organised.

NGO Recommendation

- a. Review TOR and composition of the Council
- b. Give voice to associations dealing with diverse forms of disability
- c. Establish an up to date data base of children with disabilities

Recommendation (45): Adolescent health.

The Committee recommends that the State party:

- a. *Increases its efforts to promote adolescent health including mental health by focusing in particular on the issue of reproductive health, substance abuse and health education in schools and institutions.*
- b. *Consider means of reducing teenage pregnancy including through strengthened reproductive health education and access to contraception without parental consent for adolescents.*
- c. *Ensure the provision of comprehensive health services and counselling and support for pregnant girls*

Comment 1: According to the Youth Health Centre's Annual Report for 2009, reproductive health (RH) issues such as teenage sexuality, unwanted pregnancies and abortions amongst adolescents still remain a huge challenge in Seychelles. This is in spite of free health preventive services for both males and females. The report goes on to note that in spite of some positive moves such as the reinforcement of the peer education programme and outreach programmes which have increased the number of visits, the centre suffers from staff shortage especially for mental health services and adequate space for providing counselling services.

The MDG 2010 Status report notes that 'Access to contraceptives for under 18's continue to be a problem, as numerous local conferences and seminars, with very specific recommendations, have been unable to address the issue in a meaningful and effective manner'.

Comment 2: Although the Ministry of Education has a Teenage Pregnancy Support Policy (2005), the policy is narrowly focused on reintegration in schools. It does not provide for comprehensive support for mother and child. Once reinstated, many young parents drop out of school because of lack of financial /moral support e.g. for child care etc. A study of teenage mothers in the Seychelles 2004-2008 conducted by the Seychelles Association of Women Professionals (SAWOP) revealed that only 5 out of 37 pregnant teenagers returned to school after delivery and 27 out of the 37 were neither in education or employed at the time of the interviews. Reasons given for not returning to education were 1) lack of finance, 2)

shame and embarrassment 3) Inadequate information on the policy 4) parental expectation of motherhood 5) lack of motivation.

As stated in the 2010 MDG status report, teenage pregnancy and subsequent unemployment is usually the start of the cycle of vulnerability and disadvantage if not outright poverty.

NGO Recommendation

- a. Review Policy on teenage pregnancy to provide for a more comprehensive support
- b. Provide more staff and resources to support the work of the Youth Health Centre and its outreach programmes

Recommendation (49): Education

- a. *Consider creating study groups in schools involving students at higher and lower levels in order to contribute to the improvement of the achievements of students with learning difficulties.*
- b. *Undertake a study of the reasons why students drop out of school in order to develop solutions that ensure their continuing educational or vocational training and further opportunities for employment and integration in society*
- c. *Review the curriculum and teacher training programmes with a view to incorporating human rights education including children's rights into the curriculum and implementing more participatory teaching methods*
- d. *Ratify the Convention against Discrimination in Education of 1960 of UNESCO*

Comment 1: Participants are concerned about the large numbers of children who roam the streets during schools hours. The report does not provide statistics on school dropouts or truancy and no study has been conducted in this area. There is a perception that schools do not report truancy because these children cause trouble in schools and schools are happy to see them off premises. Participants are also concerned about support for children who are suspended from school with no parental supervision.

The Nolan Report (2008) notes a serious concern about the increasing level of indiscipline and disruption among secondary students and points to a strong correlation between the unsuitability of the curriculum for a significant number of students. Lack of student motivation, disinterest and boredom with one dimensional school activities results in classroom disruption and indiscipline. A study of attendance figures for two school cohorts from secondary 1 to secondary 5, in the Nolan report estimates the attrition rate to be as high as 21% of the original cohort. The Special Education Programme targets very few students

and was initiated as a pilot project. It does not address the needs of large numbers of students who lack interest and motivation and subsequently play truant or drop out of school.

Comment 2: The NGO group feel that the curriculum is adequate and does not need reviewing. There should be early intervention and support programmes for children with learning difficulties.

NGO Recommendation

- a. Conduct comprehensive study on school dropout and truancy
- b. Reinforce early intervention and support programmes for children with learning difficulties

8. Special protection measures

Recommendation (53): Substance Abuse

- a. *In light of article 33 of the Convention, continue to take all appropriate measures including administrative, social and educational measures to protect children from the illicit use of narcotic drugs and to prevent the use of children in the illicit trafficking of such substances.*
- b. *Support rehabilitation, reintegration and recovery programmes specifically designed for child victims of drugs and substance abuse.*

Comment 1: The Report makes no mention of hard drugs such as heroin which are increasingly being used by children. Table 1 shows the number of children seeking help at Centre Mont Royal, the only drug rehabilitation centre in Seychelles.

Table 1: Number of clients seen at Centre Mont Royal.

Number of Clients Seen at Centre Mont Royal											
(Yearly Growth Rates % in Brackets)											
Age Group	2003		2004		2005		2006		2007		Total
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls	
0 - 14	6	0	8 (33)	0	9 (13)	0	2 (-78)	3 (300)	25 (1150)	4 (33)	77
15-19	9	3	5 (-44)	1 (-66)	21 (320)	2 (100)	51 (143)	5 (150)	45 (-12)	5 (0)	147
Total	15	3	13 (-13)	1 (-67)	30 (130)	2 (100)	73 (143)	8 (300)	70 (-4)	9 (13)	224

Source: Centre Mont Royal¹²

Drug use is an issue for children as Table 2 shows. Talks in post-secondary institutions (Seychelles Institute of Technology SIT, Seychelles School of A' Levels Studies SALS, Seychelles Tourism Academy STA, Maritime Training Centre MTC) are held weekly by a team of people from the Drug and Alcohol Council, the Youth Health Centre, Care and Centre Mont Royal. In one secondary school, at least 40% of the students are reported to be consuming drugs on a regular basis.

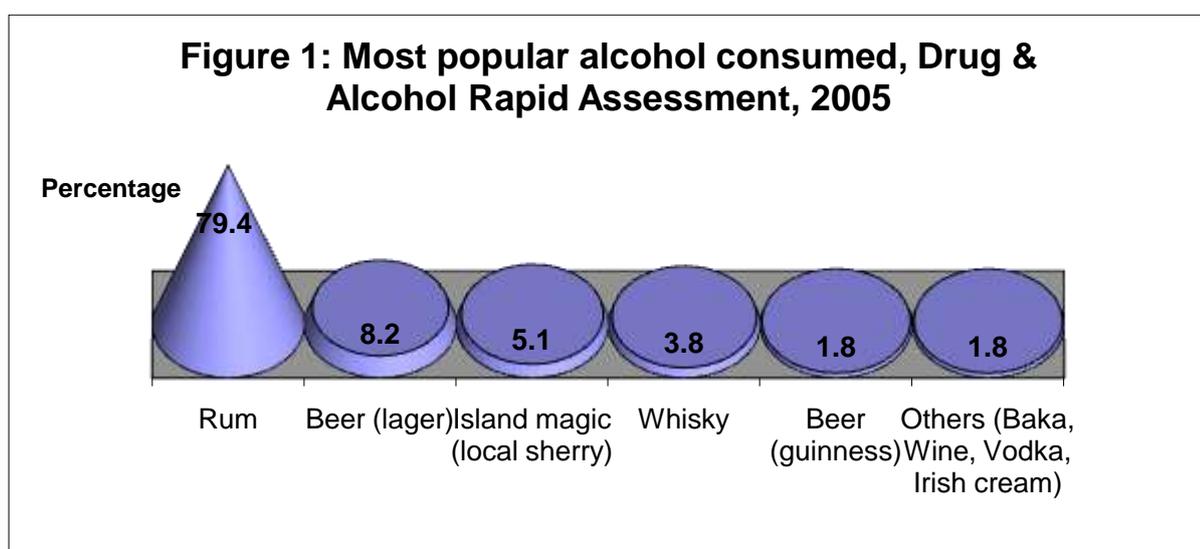
Table 2: Number of students known to be using drugs by sex of respondent

Number of students known	Sex of respondent			%		
	Female	Male		Female	Male	Both sexes
1 - 5	75	70	145	32.5	32.9	32.7
6 - 10	76	64	140	32.9	30.0	31.5
11 - 25	44	36	80	19.0	16.9	18.0
25 - 50	17	26	43	7.4	12.2	9.7
More than 50	19	15	34	8.2	7.0	7.7
Not stated		2	2		0.9	0.5
Total	231	213	444	100.0	100.0	100.0

DAC, Drug & Alcohol Rapid Assessment Survey, 2005

Other issues remain prevalence of alcohol beverages, with new products on the market targeting children. The drinks are sweet, with no smell of alcohol and resemble soft drinks. They have colourful labels with cartoon characters attractive to children. They are also placed in the same coolers, side by side with soft drinks.

Children are drinking and have easy access to alcohol as the Rapid Assessment Survey 2005 in Beau Vallon Secondary School shows.



Comment 2: Mont Royal Centre is the only rehabilitation centre in Seychelles and is not suitable for young children and youth. Young people need separate facilities /infrastructure with right personnel who can also work on character modification. The church has since 2010 set up a drug rehabilitation centre for young people with support from government.

NGO Recommendation

- a. Build a drug rehabilitation centre especially for youth
- b. Place more efforts on preventive programmes to combat social ills
- c. Provide more facilities for young people – alcohol free discotheques for teenagers.

[Recommendation \(55\): Juvenile Justice](#)

The committee recommends that the state party take additional steps to reform legislation and the system of juvenile justice in line with the Convention in particular articles 37,40 and 39 and other UN standards in the field of juvenile justice,

Comment 1: Closed circuit television is not being used.

Comment 2: Very long delays to judge cases of sexual assault.

Comment 3: Misconceptions still abound, not only about children's rights, but also child abuse. The child, as young as 7 or 8 years old, is still blamed as being the instigator of sexual abuse in many circles even professional ones. There is more sympathy for younger children. Adolescent girls and boys are not seen as victims or survivors of abuse, but as active participants. Parents are all too ready to settle for some money or gifts made to them or the promise of marriage. In some cases, these abuses are seen as economic opportunities for the families.

Comment 4: The YRTC on Praslin closed on undertaking that new facilities would be built on Mahe (closer to families). No correctional facilities have been built. It is unclear what is currently happening to juvenile delinquents. NGOs feel that building such a facility that can adequately cater for 20 to 30 adolescents is not a huge investment. The delay in providing adequate juvenile correctional facilities is unacceptable.

Conclusion

Government's interest and commitment to children is undeniable. There is strong political will to work for the well being of children. The Constitution provides special protection for children and good policies for children have been developed. There are however too many departments and agencies with portfolio responsibilities for children. This results in actions which are largely uncoordinated and a wastage of energy and resources. A large number of interventions although well meaning lack a rights based approach. Clear and bold leadership on children and efficient models of implementation are needed to move the children's agenda forward in an efficient and results oriented manner. The NGO group renews its commitment to work with government.

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Appendix 1: Focus Group Meeting with Secondary students

Date: Thursday 27th January 2011

Secondary students' views were sought on some aspects of the CRC concluding remarks. There were **15 students** altogether: **6 boys and 9 girls** from Belonie, Mont Fleuri and Plaisance School respectively.

Topics discussed:

Definition of a child:

Students knew that it was 0 to 18 years. They were not sure about the age of consent for marriage and when given the information they felt that it should be the same for both genders as they share the same rights.

Best interest of the child:

Students felt that their opinion is never sought in matters affecting them. One stated that in their school there is a suggestion box but the suggestions are not taken into consideration. They feel that teachers are more listened to than they are. In disputes between students and teachers, it is the views of teachers that matter most and given consideration. They also stated that student committees exist in some schools but they are not effective.

At home: Students feel they can generally express themselves but feel that they are not genuinely listened to by parents who are very "busy" most of the time. In the case of girls they feel that most of the time things are imposed on them by their parents. They are not allowed to make some decisions in certain matters e.g., friends, places to go to etc even if it concerns them.

Ill treatment and other forms of violence: Students oppose all forms of violence. They believe strongly in alternative punishment for example withholding a privilege. Students admit that there are students who are very disruptive and at times teachers administer certain punishments which are not appropriate. Teachers are then accused of violating student's rights. They also believe that adults should stop abusing children and they gave a few examples of abuse cases that they themselves have witnessed e.g., adults beating children, swearing at them, insulting them and some cases of neglect.

Students believe that though there are services available where children can report ill treatment or abuse these services are not effective. Again they talked about the school where school counsellors for example are not efficient and as a result students do not go to them for help. They spoke about lack of confidentiality. They named services like NCC and the police but could not say much about these services.

Abuse and neglect:

Students feel that children who are being abused sexually find it very difficult to report it. Again they referred to lack of confidentiality on the part of certain people e.g., school counsellors. They also stated that a lot of cases are reported but not much is being done to solve this problem especially where the police is concerned.

Adolescent Health: Students feel there is a lot of information for young people regarding adolescent health. Services are available, awareness is being raised but this is not being taken seriously. Many teenage girls are still getting pregnant. Most students present feel that the information being passed on is rather confusing at times e.g., they are asked not to have sex but they are given condoms.

Regarding the services available for young girls they feel that these are present but many young girls do not know about these services. They also feel that a lot of parents are not playing an effective role in educating their children on sex. They only wait until the girl gets pregnant.

Education: Although education is for free, students noted that the rate of truancy is very high. Some pupils do not turn up for school at all while some turn up but skip certain classes. Some students are in school but do not show any interest in the subjects as often times the lessons are boring, many teachers do not prepare fun activities.

Where truancy is concerned the Ministry of Education is making some effort to go after these students. There is also a Special Education Programme in place but not all students find it interesting and are therefore not making good use of it. In certain cases, some children are given community work to do.

Sexual exploitation/Prostitution: Students did not say much about this topic. They know that there are a lot of young people involved in prostitution but are not sure about the programmes in place for these people.

Substance abuse: Regarding available services, students could name e.g. CARE – a drug prevention GONGO and Centre Mont Royal, a drug rehabilitation centre. Again they believe that these places are not effective as there are a lot of relapse cases. They agreed that at school and at the community level services are available.

Students were asked: Do you feel that as a Seychellois child you are being well protected?

General Opinion:

- Abuse is still apparent in many forms but children are not accessing the services because they are afraid of the outcome
- We are being protected, we would say yes, there are services in place
- The younger the child the more abuse they suffer because they do not know about the services
- The services are there and can be accessed, however they need to do more e.g., raise awareness and give advice to children
- No we don't always feel safe
- We generally feel safe. Compared to other countries Seychelles is not too bad but we definitely need to raise more awareness regarding our rights as children
- We feel safe but there are too many children out there who do not feel the same as they are being abused by their own parents
- Students claim that they know their rights basically but there is still more work to be done to raise more awareness on the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the services that are in place to help promote and protect these rights.

Appendix 2: List of NGO/FBO Representatives.

Name	Organisation	Email	Profile
Benjamin Vel	Independent Consultant	nnyvel@yahoo.co.uk	
Pastor BIJOUX	Seventh Day Adventist	michaelbijoux@gmail.com	SDA is a faith based organization – runs children and youth group and promotes values and spiritual programmes in the community.
Anita Gardner	Deaf Association	lizyepourtande@yahoo.com	Advocates for rights of (deaf and hard of hearing) promoting non-exclusion.
Celine Fanchette	Council for the Disabled	ncfd@seychelles.net	NCFD – advocates for disabled people’s rights
Antoine Onezime	Seychelles Broadcasting Corporation	managing.director@sbc.sc	SBC – the one and only Public Broadcasting Media in Seychelles
Lucy Talbot	Daycare Association	lucybarois@yahoo.com	Early Childhood Education and Care Association – advocating for standards in practice .
Francis Accouche	Seychelles Scouts Association	seyscouts@yahoo.com	SSA – Member of the International Scouts movement –preparing young people for responsible citizenship
Antoine Dupres	Mont Royale	royal@seychelles.net	Drug and Alcohol Detox centre – (Residential and Day care service
Sister Rose Milla	Ste Elizabeth Convent		Directs the Roman Catholic Orphanage
Rosie Denis	ASPHF -	Telephone 2253 00	Family Counselling and PARENTING EDUCATION
Mahrookh Pardiwalla	Uplift Seychelles	mpardiwalla@seychelles.sc	Community empowerment Human Rights, gender
Robert Ah-Weng	CARE	care@seychelles.net	Advocacy for drug abuse
Brian Julie	LUNGOS	bjulie@seychelles.net	Human Rights Commission