



The Civil Society Compendium

A comprehensive guide for Civil Society Organisations
engaging in the Universal Periodic Review



The Civil Society Compendium

A comprehensive guide for
Civil Society Organisations engaging in the
Universal Periodic Review



A publication by

UPR Info
Rue de Varembé 3
1202 Geneva
Switzerland

+41 22 321 77 70

info@upr-info.org

UPR Info is a non-profit, non-governmental organisation headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland. It aims to raise awareness of the Universal Periodic Review and to provide capacity-building tools to all stakeholders, such as UN Member States, civil society, media, and academics.



<http://www.upr-info.org>



<http://twitter.com/UPRInfo>



<http://www.facebook.com/UPRInfo>

UPR Info expresses its gratitude to the Foreign and Commonwealth Office of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland for supporting this publication.



UK Mission
Geneva

Table of Contents

Introduction	5
Objectives	6
The Universal Periodic Review	7
What is the UPR?	8
Who participates in the UPR?	11
Why should civil society partake in the UPR?	13
When and how can civil society engage in the UPR?	15
Civil society engagement in the UPR	17
Preparation for the review	17
Participating in National Consultations	18
Submitting UPR reports	19
Organising In-Country Pre-sessions	24
Conducting advocacy and raising awareness	25
Participating in <i>UPR Info's</i> Pre-sessions Programme	27
The Review and the HRC Adoption	28
During the review	28
Between the review and the HRC adoption	30
During the HRC adoption	32
Implementation of UPR recommendations	34
Awareness-Raising	34
Cooperating	37
Reporting	38

Civil Society Coalitions at the UPR	40
The benefits of working in a coalition	40
Best practices of UPR Coalitions	42
Impact	42
Sustainability	47
Solidarity	50
Tools and Resources	51
Utilising <i>UPR Info</i> 's Database and Statistics	51
UPR Advocacy Checklist	53
S.M.A.R.T. Recommendations	54
Participation at the UN	55
<i>UPR Info</i> Publications	58
OHCHR Publications	58
Useful links	59
Timeline for CSO engagement in the UPR	60



Introduction

The crucial role of civil society in the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) is expressly recognised by the United Nations (UN), UN Member States, and in the founding resolution of the mechanism.¹ Since the UPR was introduced in 2007 Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), and Human Rights Defenders (HRDs) have constantly engaged in the process, in order to effect positive change for human rights across the world. The role of civil society has proven to be vital for the success of the UPR.

To date the UPR has achieved a 100% participation rate, with each UN Member State having engaged in the mechanism. The peer-review nature of the UPR continues to encourage global dialogue on human rights and has ensured that all countries, regardless of geographical, economic, or political influence, are accountable both nationally and internationally for their adherence to universal human rights standards.

Without the critical voices of civil society, within this process, the UPR would run the risk of becoming merely a talking shop for human rights. As it is however, through the engagement of all stakeholders, be that State or non-State actors, the UPR is constantly able to achieve a real impact on the ground.

UPR Info is a non-profit, non-governmental organisation headquartered in Geneva, Switzerland, on the doorstep of *Palais des Nations*. The organisation was founded in 2008, following the inception of the UPR and it is the first and only organisation focusing specifically on the UPR process.

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 on the ground. The organisation's extensive experience in the UPR is unique as it addresses all human rights issues in all countries, without discrimination or politicisation. Throughout its various international and in-country activities *UPR Info* has supported UPR stakeholders in over 150 countries to date.

Over the last 10 years, *UPR Info* has strengthened the unique and distinctive engagement of all parties in the UPR mechanism. The objective is, and will continue

¹ Human Rights Council Resolution A/HRC/RES/5/1, through which the UPR was established.

to be, to ensure the in-country human rights situation is at the forefront of the UPR and is the focus for change. *UPR Info* therefore works with civil society actors across the globe to ensure their views are reflected in UPR recommendations.

Objectives

This compendium aims to serve as a comprehensive guide for civil society actors engaging in the third cycle of the UPR and is presented in four parts. **Part 1** offers a concise introduction to the UPR. Following this, **Part 2** provides an up to date guide for civil society on how best to engage with the UPR. **Part 3** offers advice, and examples of best practices, for strengthening national CSO coalitions, specifically relating to the UPR. Finally, **Part 4** provides non-state actors in the UPR with a resources toolkit for engagement.



The Universal Periodic Review

“The Council shall... undertake a universal periodic review, based on objective and reliable information, of the fulfilment by each State of its human rights obligations and commitments in a manner which ensures universality of coverage and equal treatment with respect to all States; the review shall be a cooperative mechanism, based on an interactive dialogue, with the full involvement of the country concerned and with consideration given to its capacity building needs; such a mechanism shall complement and not duplicate the work of treaty bodies...” *UN General Assembly resolution A/RES/60/251*.²

In 2006 the UPR was established, under the remit of the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC), in order to address gaps in the UN Human Rights infrastructure and to complement the work of both the Treaty Body and Special Procedures systems. The UPR ensures equal treatment of all UN Member States and, that all human rights issues are discussed on a recurring basis. During the first UPR cycle, from 2008 to 2011, each UN Member State had its human rights standards scrutinised through the peer-to-peer human rights monitoring mechanism. Ahead of the second cycle in 2012 slight modifications were made to improve the process.³ At this juncture, the UPR was already being hailed as a success due to the fact that, for the first time, all UN Member States had voluntarily subjected their human rights records to international scrutiny. The UPR thus took roots as a crucial human rights mechanism. However, the question remained; was the UPR also effective in changing the human rights situation on the ground? To analyse the situation in more depth *UPR Info* published, in 2014, “Beyond promises: The impact of the UPR on the ground” and, in 2016, “The Butterfly Effect: Spreading good practices of UPR implementation”. These studies conclusively present evidence that shows the UPR has proven itself as an effective platform for discussion at an international level and that it has a positive impact on human rights at a national level. As the third cycle begins in 2017, every UN Member State has had

² Accessible from UPR Info’s [website](#).

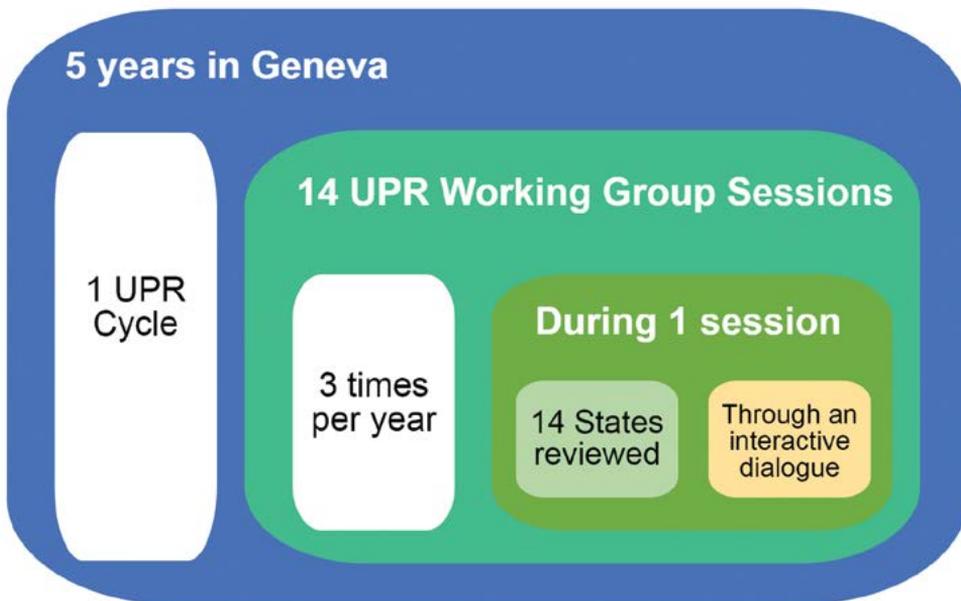
³ Accessible from UPR Info’s [website](#).

their human rights situation reviewed twice, in Geneva, Switzerland. Roughly 55,000 recommendations have been made, and approximately 72% have been supported.

What is the UPR?

Key facts about the UPR:

- Every 5 years;
- Reviews all UN Member States;
- The review is based on three background documents;
- States receive recommendations from their peers;
- The State under Review can decide to support or note the recommendations;
- Supported recommendations should be implemented by the next review;
- States can also work on implementing noted recommendation in this same timeframe.



The UPR process is cyclical in nature, repeating every 5 years. Every review follows the same format in Geneva. Each examination, conducted by the UPR Working Group, takes 3½ hours. The State under Review (SuR) is given a total of 70 minutes to address the Working Group. This time is usually used to make introductory remarks, summarising their National Report, and to offer closing remarks once the Chair of the Working Groups concludes the interactive dialogue. The SuR can also take the floor during the

interactive dialogue to both respond to questions, submitted in advance or during the review, and provide States with additional information. 140 minutes are allocated to the Interactive Dialogue of the Working Group Session. States participating in the review, known as Recommending States (RS), have the opportunity to ask questions, note comments and, crucially, make recommendations to the SuR.

The UPR Working Group is the body that conducts the human rights review of States. In practice, all 193 UN Member States, as well as the Holy See and the State of Palestine, are part of the group. The Working Group meets in Geneva, Switzerland three times per year with a total of fourteen (14) countries for each session to be reviewed. Working Group sessions usually take place in January, May, and November.

To assist the process, in each review, three UN Member States, sitting as voting members of the HRC, are chosen to serve as the “Troika”. The Troika has two main responsibilities. Firstly, to receive all advance questions and relay them to the SuR and secondly to help prepare the report of the Working Group with the assistance of the HRC Secretariat and the SuR. The SuR has the right to refuse one of the chosen countries and has the option for their regional group to be represented as one of the troika members. At the same time the RS may also excuse itself from serving as troika member. Each member of the Troika can still make recommendations to the SuR and participate as any other UN Member State in the Working Group.

Background documentation

UPR examinations are based on the content of three reports, designed to outline the progress and challenges of the human rights situation since the previous review.

1. National Report

The SuR explains accomplishments and challenges in implementing recommendations since the previous review (10,700 words). This report should be based on broad consultations at the national level with relevant stakeholders

2. Compilation of UN information

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) compiles information it receives from various UN agencies, special procedures and treaty bodies about developments in the human rights situation in the SuR since the previous cycle (5,350 words)

3. Stakeholder Summary

OHCHR summarises reports, submitted by NHRIs and CSOs, on the human rights situation in the SuR (5,350 words)

Through the Stakeholder Summary, which is comprised of CSO and NHRI submissions alike, stakeholders can propose draft recommendations to the RS of the UPR Working Group. This process ensures RS have access to information from sources other than the government of the SuR when making their comments and recommendations at the UPR examination. It is important to remember that CSOs and other stakeholders **cannot take the floor** at the review itself. Therefore submitting information and draft recommendations to be included in the Stakeholder Summary is a crucial element of CSO engagement.

Recommendations

Usually the SuR will provide the members of the Working Group with highlights of its achievements and challenges in human rights since their last UPR, after which the floor is given to the RS.⁴ It is during the Interactive Dialogue that RS take the floor to make UPR recommendations. The amount of time that each RS has varies according to the total number of States wishing to make an intervention. All those that have signed up to speak are given the opportunity to do so. As a standard rule, HRC members are allotted 3 minutes to speak, while non-members can speak for 2 minutes. However, if due to the large number of RS time does not permit, speaking time is reduced to 2 minutes per State. Sometimes, States have as few as 50 seconds to speak. It is important to note that the final report reflects only what has been said in the room; recommendations and comments not delivered within this time are excluded.

According to Resolution 5/1, the SuR can either ‘support’ or ‘note’ a recommendation. States cannot “reject” recommendations but can provide comments on “noted” recommendations, including explanations on why they do not support said recommendations.

Upon completion of the review, the OHCHR, with the support of the Troika, drafts the list of recommendations and releases it within 48 hours so that RS can verify whether their recommendations were properly recorded. The list is then presented to the Working Group a few days later by the Troika and is adopted by the Working Group. After that point, the recommendations cannot be modified. The SuR can at this stage provide its position on the recommendations or opt to consider the recommendations over the following months. The SuR’s decision will be reflected in the draft of the report. The final report, including summaries of the SuR’s intervention and the interactive dialogue, is released one week after the end of the UPR Working Group session. Meanwhile, the SuR considers whether to “support” or “note” the recommendations.

The SuR presents its response in an addendum which is officially adopted at the HRC, during a plenary session, 3–4 months after the review. States are only obliged to implement supported recommendations. However, States are also encouraged

⁴ More information regarding UPR Recommendations can be found in *UPR Info’s Guide for Recommending States* publication.

to work on noted recommendations as and when possible. Between the publication of the report of the Working Group and the adoption of the report at the HRC, CSOs and other stakeholders can engage with the government of the SuR to lobby for recommendations to be supported. At the subsequent review, the State will have to report on all measures undertaken in the area of human rights since its last UPR, and this can include in the area of noted recommendations.



CSOs and other stakeholders, can base their UPR recommendations on the treaty bodies' concluding observations or make new recommendations. The UPR can therefore be used to reinforce the implementation of these treaties. CSOs can also base their recommendations to treaty bodies on UPR recommendations. By checking the schedules for reporting under the UPR and the different treaty bodies, CSOs will know the latest recommendations or concluding observations made to their State and will be able to refer to them when they engage with the UPR or treaty bodies. This will ensure that both mechanisms reinforce one another.

Who participates in the UPR?

The multiple parties that engage in the UPR can be split into three categories; UN Member States, UN Agencies, and Other Stakeholders.

UN Member States



The peer-to-peer nature of the review ensures that whilst the SuR is the focal point, the work of the RS is crucial. The SuR must submit its National Report, upon which the review is based. The RS scrutinise this report and offer recommendations for the progress of human rights in the SuR.

UN Agencies



The OHCHR compiles UN information on the SuR, gathering information from UN Agencies, for example, OHCHR country offices, as well as reports submitted to Treaty Bodies and Special Procedures.⁵ This information forms the second document upon which the UPR is based.

Other Stakeholders

The OHCHR recognises “civil society actors, national human rights institutions, human rights defenders, academic institutions, ombudspersons and regional organisations” as ‘Other Stakeholders’.⁶ Their submissions are collated by the OHCHR to make up the third document for the review, the “Summary of other stakeholders’ information”.

⁵ More information on [Treaty Bodies and Special Procedures](#) available online.

⁶ More information on [‘Other Stakeholders’](#) available online.



Part 2 of this guide will go into further detail of the role of civil society in the UPR. In order to make effective use of the mechanism it is vital that CSOs, and HRDs, are aware of the activities they can engage in throughout the UPR.

National Human Rights Institutions

NHRIs that adhere to their mandate as independent bodies play a critical role in all stages of the UPR. As bridge-builders between UPR stakeholders NHRIs can not only facilitate dialogue between governments and civil society, but they can assist all actors in the implementation of recommendations, and work on monitoring and reporting of UPR progress. Ahead of the review, many NHRIs work as the bridge between CSOs and the government. Through their advocacy efforts, NHRIs are also suggesting recommendations to States and some of their concerns will be aligned with those of civil society, creating a momentum for coalitions. These topics are addressed further in **Part 3**. The following guide is aimed at providing civil society actors with practical advice on how best to engage with the UPR from the third cycle onwards. However, the information provided is equally applicable to NHRIs, as is the **Part 4**: Toolkit.

Why should civil society partake in the UPR?

Civil society engagement in the UPR has proven to be crucial for its success in implementing progressive policies on human rights across the globe. Without the voice and work of CSOs, and HRDs running throughout the UPR, the Geneva based review process would have less of an impact on the ground.

Nepal

Pre-sessions panellists from the organisations *Himalayan Human Rights Monitors* and *Legal Aid and Consultancy Centre* raised the issues of women's rights in Nepal, in particular addressing the State's weak laws against gender-based violence. One of the recommendations put forward by the speakers, representing many CSO voices in Nepal, was to reform the narrow definition of rape, which included a 35-day statute of limitation for reporting. This specific recommendation was raised by four States in the formal recommendations. Following the recommendations made on that issue, Nepal extended the timeframe to 180 days, and has stated it will consider further prolongation.



Four reasons for CSOs and HRDs to engage in the UPR:

1. The mechanism works

Over the course of the first two cycles of the UPR the mechanism has had 100% participation by UN Member States, regardless of political, economic, or conflict situations. *UPR Info's 2014 Beyond Promises* study showed that 48% of UPR recommendations in the first cycle were either fully or partially implemented by midterm.⁷ To sustain progress and allow the mechanism to reach its full potential, all UPR stakeholders have a responsibility to ensure effective reporting and sustainable implementation of UPR recommendations.

Seychelles

In 2011 the Seychelles was recommended, by Canada, Norway, France and Spain, to repeal discriminatory provisions against same-sex activities. In May 2016, the Seychelles' National Assembly passed an amendment to the penal code that decriminalises same-sex activities. Attorney General Ronny Govinden stated that international attention had contributed to the move: "It is a priority for the country because whenever the Seychelles is participating in an international [mechanism]... we face pressures from other countries who are asking us to remove this law."⁸

⁷ Data available in *UPR Info's Beyond Promises* publication.

⁸ Further details available in *UPR Info's The Butterfly Effect* publication.

2. Through the UPR governments and civil society can be brought together

A holistic approach to implementation of UPR recommendations is not only advised but proves time and time again to be the most sustainable method for improvements in human rights. At a time of restricting civil society space, the UPR legitimises the human rights discourse and offers what is sometimes the only opportunity to engage on human rights issues with the government.

Thailand

The Thai CSOs Coalition for the UPR was formed in 2015 at an event attended by over 100 Thai activists. The workshop resulted in the formation of joint CSO submissions, undersigned by 64 CSOs, to Thailand's second UPR.⁹ The Thai CSOs Coalition for the UPR noted a clear shift in the way that the Government approached them. In an unprecedented step, the coalition was invited to present their views on the recommendations that Thailand received, after their second UPR in May 2016, to the SuR.

3. Civil society organisations can be strengthened through the process

By working on the UPR, national and international CSOs can be brought together, where collaboration and coalitions can strengthen their work. CSOs working on different issues have cooperated for the first time through the UPR. This will be addressed further in **Part 3**.

4. It provides a great opportunity to increase awareness about human rights issues in a country

The UPR is webcast, which makes it more accessible. In addition, it usually gets more press coverage than other human rights mechanisms, and in some cases parliamentarians are also involved. Civil society actors can use the UPR to increase awareness on human rights issues, and to exert more pressure on a State to respect human rights in general.

Uganda

In Uganda ahead of the second review in November 2016, several CSOs gathered district level Government officials, religious and cultural leaders, and civil society actors for a live screening. In total, 60 people took part in the event, which took place in the northern district of Kitgum. This improved participants' understanding of the UPR and the linkage between CSO submissions and recommendations made to Uganda. It also served as an avenue for sharing lessons learned and making plans for future multi-stakeholder collaboration with the Government on the implementation of recommendations. The organisers also spoke about Uganda's UPR exercise on local radio with a coverage of 10 000 listeners.¹⁰

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ More details available in *UPR Info's Step 1 Outcome Report*.

When and how can civil society engage in the UPR?

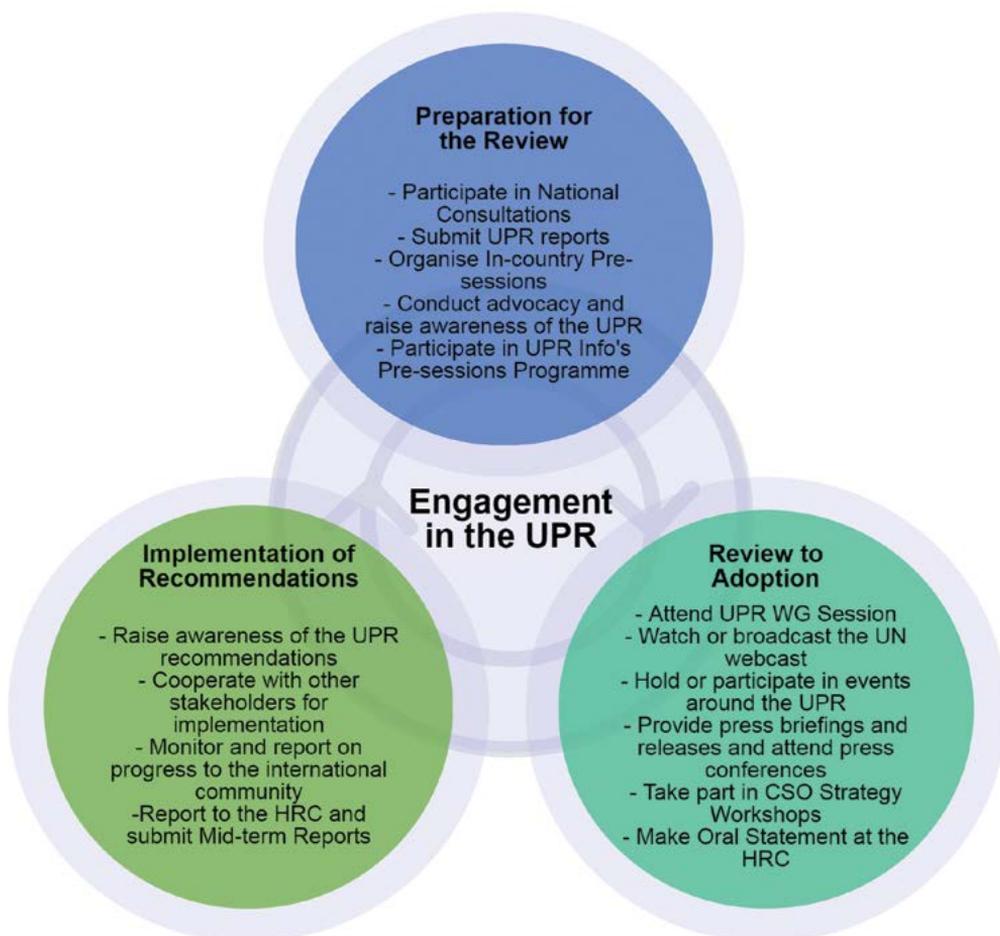
The UPR is a cyclical process with the State being reviewed once every five years. There are multiple points of entry for civil society actors throughout the process, many of which are facilitated by *UPR Info*.



UPR Info's website and database are designed to be a one-stop-shop for all UPR related needs. The site provides civil society with easy access to: submissions; timelines; reports; deadlines; factsheets; examples of best practice; and the flagship database of all UPR recommendations.

- 1. Preparation for the Review** – As the date for the Geneva-based review approaches, States, UN agencies, and other Stakeholders are once again called upon to submit their reports on the human rights situation on the ground. The SuR is strongly encouraged to conduct national consultations with civil society actors to ensure a realistic portrayal of the state of human rights in their country.
- 2. Review to Adoption** – This consists of the 3.5 hour Working Group Session during which the SuR presents its National Report and responds to questions and comments from other UN Member States. The Draft Working Group Reports, for each SuR, are released no later than a week after the review. Approximately three to four months later, during the HRC plenary sessions, the Final Reports are adopted. Civil society cannot take the floor during the review itself, but it can make statements during the adoption of the UPR reports.
- 3. Implementation of Recommendations** – Once the HRC has adopted the Final Report the SuR can begin working towards implementing the UPR recommendations. States that take a holistic approach to implementation, by engaging civil

society, NHRIs, the business sector, and key government ministries for example, are likely to ensure sustainable implementation of recommendations. States and civil society actors are also encouraged to submit Mid-term Reports at the half-way point of the UPR cycle.



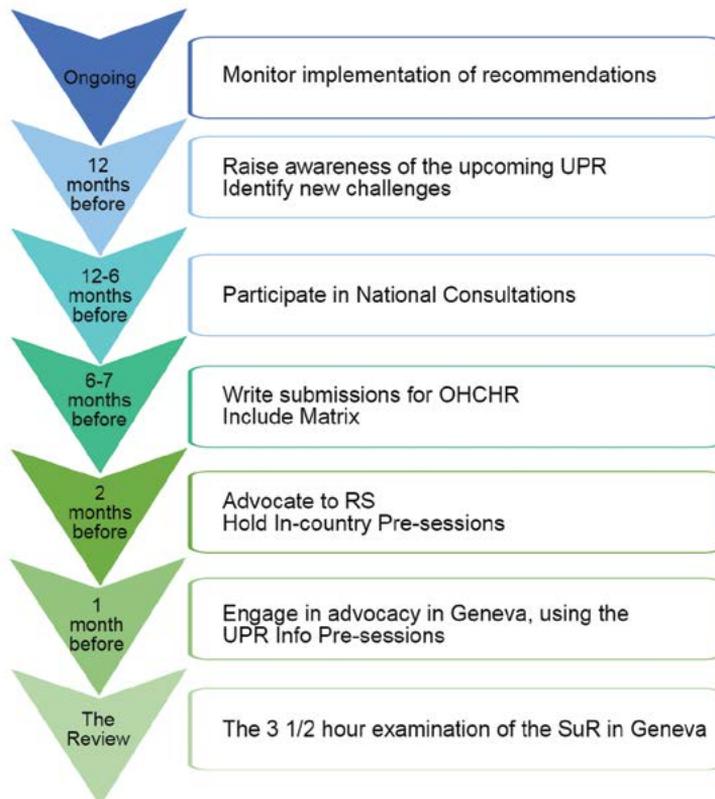


Civil society engagement in the UPR

The main objective of the UPR is to “improve the human rights situation on the ground”. The following section of this guide will give simple tips for how civil society actors can engage effectively with the entire UPR process for the advancement of human rights.

Preparation for the review

Each UPR cycle takes approximately five years. One year before the UPR examination in Geneva, the attention of all stakeholders moves towards the UPR reporting processes.



Participating in National Consultations

Resolution 5/1 of the HRC encourages the government of the SuR to prepare its National Report “through a broad consultation process at the national level with all relevant stakeholders”. The national consultation sets the government’s agenda on the UPR and demonstrates its willingness to make the best use of the UPR mechanism. If the report is based on national consultations and takes into account the concerns of civil society it can prompt a continuous process of reflection about, and lead to the progressive enhancement, of human rights in the country reviewed.

Since the national consultation is one of the key UPR elements, it is vital that a wide variety of national actors, including independent civil society representatives working on different thematic issues, are aware and involved in the process from the outset. This will help focus the review on key human rights issues and it may foster partnerships within civil society and facilitates contacts and working relationships with key State actors.



Through the following activities civil society actors can influence the outcome of the National Report:

- Encourage the government to hold broad, timely and effective national consultations prior to the preparation of the national report. The consultations should involve ministries, different levels of government (e.g. federal and state), parliamentarians and civil society. Governments should follow a well-defined timeline for a transparent and inclusive consultative process. The consultation process may also use written tools, such as questionnaires, and online tools, for example publishing and sharing the draft national report, to ask for comments.
- Participate in national consultations related to the UPR, e.g. attend government-hosted meetings or web-based consultations.
- Alert other stakeholders and civil society contacts and encourage the widest possible engagement in national consultations; e.g. arrange public meetings, conferences, including participation of parliamentarians. This could be an opportunity for strengthening the human rights movement in the SuR.
- Comment on the national report if the government makes it available.
- Call for subsequent regular meetings with government contacts throughout the UPR process.
- NHRIs can be an important channel of communication between the government and civil society. Using their unique mandate, NHRIs can potentially stimulate dialogue between the government and civil society. They may also help ensure the representation of marginal groups, which may otherwise be forgotten in the UPR process.

Submitting UPR reports

The Summary of Other Stakeholder's Information is one of the three main documents upon which the UPR is based. It is compiled by the OHCHR based on information submitted by CSOs, NHRIs, and any other stakeholders in the process. The summary contains "credible and reliable" information on the human rights situation in the country being reviewed.¹¹ Submitting information for inclusion in the stakeholder's summary is one of the most direct and inclusive ways your organisation can participate in the UPR. UN ECOSOC accreditation is not a requirement to submit information to the stakeholder's summary. More information on ECOSOC status can be found in **Part 4: Toolkit**. The OHCHR also welcomes and encourages submissions from groups and organisations that do not normally engage with the UN.



Why make a submission?

- To influence the outcome of the review in the UPR Working Group by providing information and S.M.A.R.T recommendations that other States can refer to when identifying the key human rights situation in the SuR.
- To provide a basis for advocacy to States in advance of the interactive dialogue.
- To counterbalance the national report and demonstrate a full picture of the human rights situation.



CSO written submissions to the UPR cannot be anonymous or confidential; the name of the CSO submitting the information and the written submission will be available online. Reference to individual cases should therefore only be made if the safety and wellbeing of the individuals concerned are not at risk. If there is a fear of reprisal, national CSOs may wish to submit information through an international CSO.

Submissions deadlines are roughly 6–8 months before the review, and documents should be submitted to the OHCHR through an online system. Specific guidelines and links to official information and deadlines for submissions will be detailed in **Part 4: Toolkit**.

What to include?

Submissions must follow the guidelines published by the OHCHR.¹² These technical guidelines provide very clear instructions on how to successfully engage with the UPR mechanism. The guidelines reiterate formatting constraints, such as:

- Word limits: 2,815 words for a single organisation and 5,630 words for a joint submission;

¹¹ More information is available from the [OHCHR website](#).

¹² Ahead of the third cycle the OHCHR published [New Technical Guidelines](#) with CSOs should follow when writing their UPR submission.

- Deadlines; usually around 6-8 months prior to the review;
- Preferred languages; submissions in English, French, or Spanish.

Information can be annexed and endnotes can be used for references but should not include any substantive information. The document also offers practical suggestions in regards to appropriate content, for example: the need to clearly identify the recommendations being discussed, including draft S.M.A.R.T recommendations (explained below) for States to take forward to the UPR, and focusing afresh on the implementation of previous recommendations.

For the third cycle of the UPR, with the aim of improving the effectiveness of written submissions, the OHCHR has developed new Guidelines for Other Stakeholders,¹³ and devised ‘*Matrices of recommendations of countries to be reviewed during the 3rd cycle of the UPR*’.¹⁴ The purpose of the matrix is to collect precise and specific information on the level of implementation, in the SuR, for both the supported and noted previous recommendations. They will be used by the OHCHR to draft the document on the summary of other stakeholders’ information. All “other stakeholders” are encouraged to download their country matrix, complete the final column in the table, and submit it in addition to their written submission, the word count of which is not affected by comments added to the matrix. The matrix provides a list of received recommendations, clustered by theme, and then allows space for “Assessment/comments on level of implementation”. Section 5 of the Technical Guidelines explains further the benefits of the new matrices and reiterates the need for submissions to provide information on “developments since the last review and any other human rights issues”.¹⁵ The matrices also encourage stakeholders to identify “challenges or needs of technical cooperation” where recommendations have not been implemented.



Use OHCHR’s CSO Submission Matrix to take stock of implementation of recommendations from the previous cycle. This can be annexed to your report and is not included in the word count. For further information the Guide is available online, and the matrices will be uploaded to *UPR Info*’s website when available from the OHCHR.¹⁶

¹³ More information on the [New Guidelines](#) is available online.

¹⁴ The table of matrices is available from the [OHCHR website](#).

¹⁵ [Technical Guidelines](#).

¹⁶ Available at <https://www.upr-info.org/en/how-to/documentation-for-ngos/participation-at-the-un> and on specific country pages <https://www.upr-info.org/en/review>.

Drafting UPR Recommendations

The S.M.A.R.T method applied to the UPR adds helpful criteria for writing precise and action-oriented recommendations.¹⁷ These should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound.



Effective recommendations are the most important outcome of the review process in Geneva. Recommendations can ensure that implementation, or lack thereof, can be measured and reported upon at the next review if they adhere to the S.M.A.R.T formula. More information on S.M.A.R.T recommendations available in **Part 4: Toolkit**.

S.M.A.R.T recommendations should be included in the CSO submission because precise and action-oriented recommendations are:



- **Easier to implement:** Vague recommendations are notoriously difficult to interpret, and therefore challenging to implement, for the SuR. A precise recommendation will clearly explain what action is expected from the SuR.
- **Easier to monitor:** A precise recommendation, to which it is possible to say, yes or no on whether it has been implemented, will make the assessment easier and increase accountability.

In order to better analyse the specificity of recommendations, Professor Edward R. McMahon of the University of Vermont (US), with the support of *UPR Info*, decided to analyse the action requested by each recommendation and to attribute a category. This categorisation ranks recommendations on a scale from 1 (minimal action) to 5 (specific action).

Specificity of recommendations has risen from UPR cycle 1 to 2 and the trend is likely to continue as States focus on ensuring effective implementation and follow up of recommendations in the third cycle.

¹⁷ More information regarding S.M.A.R.T Recommendations can be found in *UPR Info's Guide for Recommending States* publication.

1

Recommendations directed at Recommending States, or calling upon the SuR to request technical assistance, or share information

(Example of verbs: call on, seek, share)

2

Recommendations emphasizing continuity

(Example of verbs: continue, maintain, persevere, persist, pursue)

3

Recommendations to consider change

(Example of verbs: analyse, consider, envisage, envision, examine, explore, reflect upon, revise, review, study)

4

Recommendations of action that contains a general element

(Example of verbs: accelerate, address, encourage, engage with, ensure, guarantee, intensify, promote, speed up, strengthen, take action, take measures or steps towards)

5

Recommendations of specific action

(Example of verbs: conduct, develop, eliminate, establish, investigate, undertake; as well as legal verbs: abolish, adopt, amend, implement, enforce, ratify)

What does the OHCHR summary include?

For a CSO submission to be considered for inclusion in the summary, it must be **credible and reliable**. The OHCHR does not necessarily have the time to check the information provided by CSOs, therefore they need to have trust in the information they receive.



A joint submission increases the credibility and visibility of CSOs' information, therefore increasing the likelihood of its inclusion in the summary. This is especially true for national CSOs which might not be known to the OHCHR.

CSOs should use technical language and concrete examples, as this will indicate that the submission is based on first-hand information and data. Second-hand information and supporting evidence of the identified priority issues may be annexed to the submission for reference.

To increase the chances of getting information included in the summary, CSOs should provide the following information on each issue:

- Information on the implementation of recommendations made on the issue in previous UPR cycles.

- Updates on the issue, including setbacks but also the State’s achievements and best practices.
- Draft S.M.A.R.T recommendations to the SuR.

Should it be a joint or individual submission?

Both individual and joint submissions are considered by OHCHR, but they each have their advantages and disadvantages. An individual submission by a CSO is limited to **2,815 words**, excluding foot notes and annexes. A joint submission submitted by a coalition of CSOs (two CSOs or more) can reach **5,630 words**. A CSO can submit only one individual submission but can be part of an unlimited number of joint submissions.

A joint CSO submission:

- Increases the visibility and credibility of the CSO submission and the chances of having information included in the OHCHR report.
- Allows CSOs to pool resources to engage in the UPR regardless of their individual capacities.
- Provides the opportunity to strengthen the cooperation with the broader national civil society, which is essential for advocacy and follow-up.

Armenia

Ahead of Armenia’s first UPR in 2010, OSF Armenia coordinated the joint submission of the national CSO UPR coalition. When the informal coalition decided to also issue a submission for the State’s second UPR, OSF Armenia invited partners and other organisations to participate in the drafting process. To maximise the effectiveness and inclusiveness of the process, thematic working groups engaged them on relevant clusters of recommendations.

An individual CSO submission:

- Can be faster to prepare as it does not involve negotiating the text with other CSOs.
- Avoids the need to compromise on key issues that the CSO wants to raise.
- Can focus on one or more specific issues, which makes it easier for OHCHR to see the priorities.
- Is effective if your organisation is known to OHCHR and they have confidence in the information you provide.

Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children sends a two-page submission for each country reviewed on the legality of corporal punishment and always gets mentioned in the OHCHR summary.



CSOs do not have to choose between submitting an individual or joint submission. They can prepare an individual submission and participate in as many joint submissions as they like. It is up to CSOs to decide which will be the most effective way to communicate their issues.

The process of drafting and submitting reports can be time and energy intensive and there are benefits and drawbacks to drafting either an individual submission or a joint submission, however submitting reports to the OHCHR at this stage of the UPR is key for the mechanism to effectively examine the human rights situation of the SuR. *UPR Info* works with CSOs to guide them through this stage of the UPR process and has organised CSO Submission Workshops designed to bring national CSOs and HRDs together to draft submissions. These workshops are an opportunity to share good practices from those who have previously engaged in the process, and to foster thematic working groups to draft submissions. The workshops also pave the way for CSO cooperation ahead of the next phases of the UPR.

Thailand

In 2015, *UPR Info* worked with national Thai CSOs on the drafting of UPR submissions and subsequently supported the creation of the “Thai CSOs Coalition for the UPR” to effectively and constructively coordinate CSO activities throughout the UPR process. This led to the creation of a joint submission by the coalition, backed by 64 CSOs.



Data from a national CSO coalition joint submission is more likely to be reflected in the OHCHR summary. Joint submissions are believed to have more credibility behind them and States are more receptive as they do not need to question the credibility of each single organisation.

What happens after sending the CSO submission?

Once the CSO submission is received, the OHCHR will check if it complies with its technical guidelines. If it does, the OHCHR then selects information from all the submissions it has received from CSOs and other stakeholders to create its summary of stakeholders’ report. CSO submissions are then made available from the both *UPR Info*’s country specific pages, and OHCHR’s website.

Organising In-Country Pre-sessions

In-Country Pre-sessions are interactive meetings between national CSOs and embassies in the SuR. They ensure broad consultations among national UPR stakeholders and reinforce sustainable links between national CSOs and embassies, prior to the review in Geneva. Embassies are powerful allies in the UPR and can provide political support and funding for CSOs activities. Embassies are interested in receiving evidence of implementation, especially on the recommendations made by their country. Therefore, this can compound the legitimacy of CSOs, especially those working in a reporting capacity, and can also safeguard CSOs from potential reprisals.

UPR Info has held In-Country Pre-sessions in Myanmar, Tanzania, Thailand and Uganda, providing local human rights defenders with a platform to voice their concerns to diplomats. This in-turn ensured that recommendations formulated by RS reflected local realities and community needs.

In-Country Pre-sessions can provide a platform for an increased number of CSOs to engage with advocacy at the UPR. In Uganda 25 CSOs were able to take the floor and share their human rights concerns with a limited number of embassies. In Geneva, fewer CSOs have the opportunity to speak however there is a broader audience of approximately 25-30 Permanent Missions. The In-Country Pre-sessions are complementary to *UPR Info*'s Pre-sessions held in Geneva one month before the review (see below for more details about Geneva Pre-sessions).

UPR Info recognises that, in some countries, there is a relatively low number of embassies in the capital. In-Country Pre-session may be therefore be complemented, or even substituted, with a Pre-session in a neighbouring country's capital which is more densely populated with embassies. In the case of Myanmar, an In-Country Pre-session was held in both Yangon, Myanmar and Bangkok, Thailand in order to enable national CSOs to reach the broadest audience possible.¹⁸

Conducting advocacy and raising awareness

Sustained advocacy throughout and between UPR cycles is critical to keep the mechanism on the agenda of the government and for raising awareness of, human rights issues.

Prior to the UPR examination in Geneva, advocacy often refers to the work of CSOs to influence RS that have an interest in a certain State or issue at the upcoming review. It is critical that civil society actors engage in effective advocacy with these targeted RS as this can lead to the incorporation of their priority issues in UPR advanced questions and recommendations.¹⁹



UPR Info provides a database <https://www.upr-info.org/database/> of all recommendations made at the UPR. Check the database to identify the States that previously made recommendations on the issues of interest.



Approach the Permanent Missions in Geneva, through the diplomat who manages their involvement with the UPR or the Human Rights Council, to arrange a meeting or pass on advocacy documents. You can find the contact details for all Permanent Missions at <http://www.unog.ch>.

Due to the high number of CSO submissions, not all the listed issues are included in OHCHR summaries or brought to the attention of members of the Working Group. Therefore, advocacy is a crucial part of the process to make sure that issues of interest are raised during the interactive dialogue.

¹⁸ More information on the [In-country Pre-session](#) available on *UPR Info*'s website.

¹⁹ More information regarding advance questions can be found in *UPR Info*'s [Guide for Recommending States](#) publication.

CSOs should engage in lobbying in the SuR through embassies, approximately 3 to 4 months before the date of review as the information has then to be sent to the capital and to the mission in Geneva before the RS formulates its recommendations.

Lobbying RS can, and should, also take place in Geneva approximately one month before the date of review. To facilitate CSO advocacy, *UPR Info* also organises Pre-sessions in Geneva, this programme is discussed in the next section of this guide.

UPR Advocacy Factsheets

UPR Info recommends that when lobbying, both in the SuR and in Geneva, CSOs develop UPR Advocacy Factsheets. In several countries, where there is strong coordination amongst national civil society, in particular UPR coalitions, CSOs have already collectively developed these documents.

The Factsheets are a collection of individual documents, each focusing on a particular human rights theme. Together the documents provide a comprehensive overview of the human rights situation within the country, including how certain issues have been reflected in the State's previous UPRs. Crucially, the factsheets concentrate on priority issues and present for each about 4 or 5 specific questions and draft recommendations in a short document of one or two pages. These recommendations and questions are those that civil society would like to see raised at the UPR, and this will allow delegates of the RS to easily incorporate them in their statements.



The idea for UPR factsheets originated with the Human Rights NGO Forum of Mongolia ahead of the State’s UPR in 2015, and proved to be a success at the country’s Pre-session. Since then, civil society groups from several States have followed suit, including Australia, India, Moldova, Myanmar, Thailand, Uganda, and Venezuela. States’ feedback on the factsheets has been resoundingly positive; delegates are particularly impressed by the coherence and clarity of the publications, where each issue contextualised at the beginning of each factsheet, followed by the relevant recommendations.²⁰



An Advocacy Checklist is provided in **Part 4: Toolkit**.

Participating in UPR Info’s Pre-sessions Programme

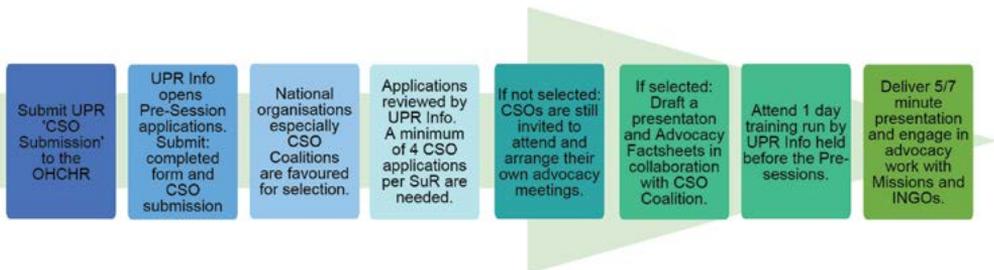
UPR Info established the Pre-sessions Programme in 2012 with the aim of pursuing two main objectives that benefit Permanent Missions and civil society alike:

■ **Supporting bottom-up advocacy at the UPR.**

The Pre-sessions serve as a unique sounding board for grassroots and national voices to bring their knowledge and experience to the attention of the international community. Upon returning to their home countries after participating at the Pre-sessions, civil society speakers feel a sense of ownership and vested interest in the UPR process. They are also inclined to share their Pre-sessions experience with their colleagues and communities, which helps to popularise the UPR and raise awareness of the impact it can have for all rights holders.

■ **Providing Permanent Missions with first-hand sources of information.**

The Pre-sessions represent a prime opportunity for civil society to save time and resources by engaging with multiple Permanent Missions in a single forum. Compared with the large quantity of UPR written submissions, the Pre-sessions bring the information to life by providing human rights testimonies of civil society actors. Permanent Missions can also send questions in advance to UPR Info, which the



²⁰ More information can be found in UPR Info’s [Pre-sessions](#) publication.

moderator will ask to the civil society speakers during the Pre-sessions. The questions offer the opportunity to gain information on the level of implementation of previous recommendations, as well as the broader human rights context.

UPR Info endeavours to prioritise the participation of national CSOs, and CSO coalitions, on the Pre-session panels in order to give maximum exposure to voices from the ground.

Rwanda

During the Pre-session of Rwanda ahead of its second cycle, a member of the indigenous Batwa people explained the marginalisation experienced by his community in the country. The Batwa population had been dispossessed of their traditional land, and had their forestry way of life destroyed.

Consequently 87% of the population lived in extreme poverty. In addition, there was neither access to legal recourse nor programmes in place to support the rehabilitation of the Batwa. While only three recommendations were made on the rights of the Batwa in the first cycle, the issue was significantly more visible in the second cycle, yielding nine recommendations in total.



The Review and the HRC Adoption

UPR examinations, and adoptions of subsequent reports, take place over a period of approximately four months. During this time there are multiple opportunities for civil society actors and UN Member States to interact and discuss how to further progress human rights through the UPR.

During the review

As explained above, during the Working Group Session only UN Member States can take the floor, though CSOs with ECOSOC status can be present in the room. For this reason many civil society actors could see engaging in this phase of the UPR as an unwise investment of time and resources. However, there are many ways in which CSOs can have an effective impact on the UPR during the examinations.

POSSIBLE ACTIONS	BENEFITS	CAUTIONS	TIPS
Attending the UPR WG Session, in Geneva	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor the review on social media channels • Make contact with sympathetic RS • Make contact with the State delegation • Make contact with International CSOs and partner organisations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Costly when you cannot take the floor • Difficult to arrange meetings with States given busy UPR timetable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Follow <i>UPR Info</i> social media stream • Ask Geneva-based partners to monitor and attend meetings
Watch/broadcast the UN webcast live or at a later time, in-country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the opportunity to raise awareness about the process • Know the recommendations prior to the draft report publication • Host other civil society actors in viewing event, developing UPR CSO bonds • Access the review at a more appropriate time 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Live streams can breakdown due to limited internet connections 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If hosting a viewing, have alternative plans in case of technical failures • Hold the event a day after, when the webcast is available • Register and gather contact details and area of work of all those in attendance of a viewing
Hold/ Participate in events on the situation, in-country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to raise awareness of issues and the country specific context • Connect with Geneva based international non-governmental community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attendance may be low due to lack of awareness around the UPR • Impact limited as UPR statements are finalised at this stage 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If events are planned include a range of speakers, such as Ambassadors, or Geneva-based panellists via video link, to draw attention to the event
Press briefings and releases, in Geneva and/or in-country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Writing a press release ensures a focus on priority issues • Provides media outlets with digestible information on the event 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unless the reporter/outlet has a basic understanding of the mechanism misreporting can occur 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide briefings for journalist • Invite media outlets to <i>UPR Info</i> led training

Between the review and the HRC adoption

Following the review, and before the adoption of the Draft Report of the Working Group, the SuR, in line with directions from Capital, makes initial responses to recommendations, indicating those recommendations that have been supported, noted, or left pending. The SuR then has until the adoption of the report at the HRC a few months later to make its final responses to the recommendations, as at this point the report is formally adopted. During this period civil society actors can engage primarily with the government of the SuR but also with NHRIs, development agencies, and embassies in order to influence the adoption of recommendations.

CSO Strategy Workshop

After the review, *UPR Info* encourages civil society to meet to discuss the recommendations received in Geneva, thus building on connections made during the preparation phase of the UPR. At this time, it is likely that many of the UPR recommendations will be left pending. This is the time to advocate for their acceptance. CSOs can, during these workshops, discuss, potentially in thematic clusters: their ideal and expected response from the SuR, their lobbying strategy ahead of adoption, and their proposed implementation plan. Once developed, this implementation plan can then be shared with the government and the NHRIs to encourage inclusive and sustainable implementation.



Implementation Strategy and Matrix. CSOs, working within thematic clusters, should develop a strategy for both lobbying the government and for the implementation of recommendations, identifying key actors and the roles they can play in the third phase of the UPR. Once all recommendations have been discussed CSOs can then create a joint Implementation Matrix, which further details the required government actions, the responsible ministries, and the indicators of successful recommendation.

Uganda

Following the UPR review of Uganda in November 2016, *UPR Info*, together with the Human Rights Network Uganda (HURINET), OHCHR Uganda, Defend Defenders and Lutheran World Federation Uganda organised the “*CSO Workshop to develop implementation plans and action strategies for UPR Recommendations*”. At this event, the Women’s Rights Cluster noted with great satisfaction that the draft recommendation Ugandan women’s organisations had suggested was ultimately made to Uganda by Germany; “Swiftly enact the Marriage and Divorce Bill of 2009 to end discrimination of women in family law and enact a new Succession Act promoting equal inheritance rights for both women and men”. The Government of Uganda left this recommendation pending therefore the Women’s Rights Cluster, at this workshop, worked to develop an Implementation Strategy and formulate plans for lobbying the government. The Women’s Rights Cluster seized this opportunity to develop a strategy on how to advocate for its acceptance prior to the adoption stage.

Aside from developing collaboration between civil society actors, through strategy workshops, CSOs should also consider the following, prior to the adoption of the UPR Working Group Report in Geneva:

■ **Lend your expertise on an issue or recommendation.** Contact your government to urge their support for your favoured recommendations and provide them with your rationale as to why they should. By putting your own expertise behind a UPR recommendation you both enhance that recommendation and enhance your organisation's profile.

■ **Don't try to reinvent the wheel.** Use whatever tools you find most effective be that letters to ministers, public statements, media campaigns, or in-person meetings with government officials.

■ **Contact directly the States that made your preferred recommendations.** Encourage them to pressure your government into accepting the recommendations you find critical.

■ **Work with the media.** Translate into local languages and publicise specific recommendations, as well as your suggested approach to its follow-up. Media coverage can help elaborate on the specific human rights concerns that the recommendations are supposed to address.

Mongolia

In Mongolia and Malawi, CSOs successfully advocated for the Government to accept an increased number of recommendations. In Mongolia, the Government eventually accepted 91% of the pending recommendations at the adoption thanks to CSOs advocacy work.



CSOs can lobby the SuR to change its position on noted recommendations, especially those that are in line with international commitments and obligations, and notably treaty bodies concluding observations, before adoption at the HRC plenary session.

States under Review cannot reject UPR recommendations.

Contrary to what is often said, a SuR cannot technically “reject” UPR recommendations. It can only indicate which recommendations “enjoy the State’s support” and which ones are “noted”. The only difference between the two is that when a SuR indicates that a recommendation enjoys its support, it makes a political commitment to implement that recommendation before the next review. Nonetheless, the State can always decide to implement noted recommendations at a later stage. During the first UPR cycle, 19% of noted recommendations were implemented; hence the importance of maintaining a dialogue on noted recommendations with the State.²¹

²¹ Data available in *UPR Info's Beyond Promises* publication.

During the HRC adoption

The HRC's adoption of the UPR Working Group Report and Addendum is the final stage of the review process in Geneva. One hour is allocated for the adoption of each report under Item 6 of the HRC session.

Oral Statements

Each one-hour session is further broken down into three 20-minute segments. In the first segment, the SuR presents its comments on the review, and often comments on its position on recommendations. NHRIs with A Status (according to the Paris Principles), are able to take the floor directly after the SuR.²² This is followed by the other States, UN agencies and regional organisations that may make interventions for 20 minutes in total. The third segment formally allows CSOs and HRDs to take the floor and make a two-minute intervention each. Usually, 10 CSOs are given the floor, but if the 20 minutes are not fully used, additional CSOs can be given the floor. This is the only stage of the UPR process where civil society is permitted to address the HRC.



ECOSOC consultative status is required to both attend the session and take the floor to make an oral statement. Similar to attending the Working Group, some accredited organisations may be willing to sponsor non-ECOSOC organisations to attend the session.

If you are unable to travel to Geneva to make an oral statement, you can address the HRC by sending your video statement. This new option was introduced in 2012 to enhance civil society participation. When selecting the statements, priority will be given to organisations involved in the national process or to those that submitted information for the stakeholder's summary. The video statement option is limited to organisations with ECOSOC status, which **do not** have a representative or an office in Geneva and which do not have accredited individuals to that particular session of the HRC. Statements delivered by video message are subject to the same rules as oral statements delivered in person, as laid out in ECOSOC resolution 1996/31.²³

The video messages are subject to the same time limits as, and should mirror as closely as possible, the oral statements delivered in person.

In particular, the following rules must be strictly observed:

1. The video statement must consist of a single shot of one individual delivering a statement, seated against a neutral, monochrome background;
2. The camera should be focussed on the person's face, and should not move during the shot;

²² More information is available from the [OHCHR website](#).

²³ Full text available from the [OHCHR website](#).

3. No symbols, flags, banners or other images are permitted in the shot, either in the background or on the clothing of the person delivering the statement. CSOs are encouraged to include captioning on the video statement, and to consider including sign language, to enhance participation of persons with disabilities. A transcript of the video statement must be submitted in order to facilitate translation.



Further guidelines on video statements are available in **Part 4: Toolkit**.

The importance of civil society taking the floor to give their thoughts on human rights concerns around the UPR should not be understated. States can often overlook important issues or take a congratulatory tone in their interventions with the SuR. Therefore, civil society plays a crucial role in highlighting issues that go unaddressed. With a maximum of two minutes to speak, it is key that due care and attention is paid when drafting the statement.

DOs	DON'Ts
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Mention what is missing from the National Report and Outcome Document; ✓ Challenge the responses given by the SuR to questions and recommendations; ✓ Quote specific recommendations contained in the Working Group report; ✓ Quote what the SuR said during the Working Group or the plenary adoption. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✗ Talk about the human rights situation in general without any reference to the UPR; ✗ Forget to refer to the Outcome Document; ✗ Make recommendations to the SuR; ✗ Forget to encourage the SuR to implement the recommendations already made.



Two minutes is not much time to speak. If writing in English, a two-minute statement will translate to roughly 300 words. Statements that extend past the allotted two minutes will be cut off by the HRC President.

Oral statements delivered at the HRC are also webcast, and archived. It is worth noting that by this point in the process, when CSOs can directly interact with the HRC, all recommendations will have been supported or noted. Be aware that an oral statement will not have an impact on the examination of the SuR or the recommendations; however it is a crucial opportunity to highlight discrepancies in the process. CSOs can use the allotted time during the Item 6 debate to raise issues regarding, for example, lack of national consultation from the government, incidences of reprisals, and to express concerns and expectations regarding implementation and follow-up.



Your organisation may want to share the oral statement with the media in order to raise additional awareness about your concerns. This is a particularly useful time to do so because once the report is formally adopted, the process of implementation should officially begin.



It is important to note that statements that do not refer in some way to the UPR could be halted by a point of order by a State or the President of the HRC.

CSOs can submit written statements under any Item of the HRC agenda, including Item 6, which is dedicated to the UPR. However, written statements have less impact than oral statements.

Press Conferences

Many States will release statements or hold press conferences regarding their UPR review. Holding an in-country press conference after the adoption of the report can be an effective way of garnering media attention for the recommendations the government has committed to and the areas in which civil society are able and willing to help implement recommendations. It is also a chance to highlight the work being done on recommendations that were noted or that the SuR failed to support fully.

Implementation of UPR recommendations

After the HRC adoption of the Working Group Report, the implementation phase of the UPR begins. Ensuring effective implementation of recommendations is at the very heart of the UPR process and relies on all stakeholders' engagement.

Upon completion of a review, some States are keen to quickly put the UPR exercise behind them. It is therefore essential that CSOs continue to advocate for the implementation of recommendations between reviews. CSOs should utilise this opportunity to go beyond the role of government watchdog and actively offer strategies and support to the government throughout the implementation stage.

UPR Info has identified three steps during the implementation phase through which CSOs can engage effectively in following up on UPR recommendations: awareness-raising, cooperation, and reporting. During the five years of the implementation phase, CSOs have many allies to work with for the sustainable implementation of recommendations (see Page 12 for UPR stakeholders).

Awareness-Raising

To improve the human rights situation on the ground, civil society actors must systematically follow up on progress made by the State regarding UPR outcomes. By engaging proactively with the following UPR stakeholders CSOs can raise awareness of the UPR.

The Media

Engaging the independent media in the UPR mechanism provides another level of scrutiny of State actions. Engagement could include providing training on human rights and the UPR to ensure accurate coverage of the process.

Sierra Leone

In August 2016, the Human Rights Commission Sierra Leone, the Human Rights Defenders Network Sierra Leone, and *UPR Info* delivered training on the UPR mechanism for 25 journalists. Attendees were provided with concrete examples of how journalists can engage with the UPR such as: sharing information with the public on what the UPR is and what recommendations Sierra Leone received; reporting on implementation and multi-stakeholders collaboration; holding actors accountable to their UPR commitments; and establishing a human rights network of journalists.



Encourage the establishment of a national Human Rights Network for Journalists to maximise coverage, knowledge and resources of human rights reporting. Provide training on the UPR to improve the understanding of the mechanism and update media outlets with progress reports to encourage continuous reporting on implementation of recommendations.

Parliamentarians

Parliamentarians are ideally placed to keep the UPR on the State's agenda. In many cases parliamentarians are relatively unaware of the commitments a government has made during the review process in Geneva as the UPR, in most cases, is coordinated by one or perhaps two government departments. CSOs should break down the UPR, the recommendations, and their implementation plan into digestible segments and take a thematic approach to engaging with key parliamentarians.

Sierra Leone

As a result of the Letter of Cooperation adopted during the Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue on UPR Implementation, in Freetown, in 2016, the CSO UPR Coalition together with the Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights and the Justice Sector Coordination office agreed to establish a technical committee to draft a joint implementation matrix to guide the follow-up phase.



Engage with, or advocate for the creation of, an All-Party Parliamentary Human Rights Committee to raise awareness both within the parliament and with constituencies about the state's human rights obligations and the progress of realising UPR recommendations.

Embassies

Engaging in advocacy towards the countries that made the recommendations is crucial when encouraging inter-State dialogue and enhancing the 'peer-to-peer' nature of the review beyond the constraints of the review itself. By advocating RS to follow-up bi-laterally, the SuR is reminded that both civil society and the international community are monitoring the government's progress toward implementation.

Mongolia

UPR Info, in 2015, organised a round-table meeting among civil society representatives and foreign embassies to update the diplomatic community on multi-stakeholder discussions on UPR implementation. This meeting was also an opportunity for embassies to share their strategy during the implementation in the SuR, and how they envisage working with CSOs. Several new partnerships and contacts between embassies and CSOs were established. The representatives from the United Kingdom and Canada also underlined how CSOs could access their funding programmes. State representatives concluded the meeting by proposing to organise subsequent meetings to engage more embassies and the CSO UPR Coalition.



Advocating to RS can take place throughout the process of the UPR and CSOs should encourage embassy staff to continue bilateral dialogues with the SuR at the national level to ensure effective, inclusive and sustainable implementation of recommendations.

UN Agencies

CSOs should strive to work with UN agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the OHCHR country teams. Such bodies are widely acknowledged as partners for implementation, and they can offer resources to support UPR implementation.

Kenya

The OHCHR Kenya Office and *UPR Info Africa* co-sponsored a workshop in 2015 that brought together Government officials, the NHRI and CSOs to develop a national implementation matrix for Kenya's second cycle UPR recommendations. This matrix was developed using the CSO implementation plan that the CSOs and the NHRI developed at the CSO strategy workshop as a blue print. Such meetings contributed to building a mutual understanding of each other's needs, opportunities and challenges in the implementation phase. The timeline attributed to each recommendation were aligned with the country's development programme, Vision 2030, and the strategic plans of the various ministries. This approach created an added impetus for implementation as activities set out how to implement Vision 2030 and simultaneously contribute to the fulfilment of UPR recommendations. The fine-tuning of the implementation matrix was conducted by a core group consisting of the Ministry of Justice, *UPR Info Africa*, OHCHR, and Kenya National Commission on Human Rights. OHCHR Kenya made the final edits to the document and the matrix was published and officially launched in June 2016.²⁴

²⁴ The [Government Implementation Plan Matrix \(2nd Cycle\)](#) is available online.



Ideally through the CSO UPR Coalition, keep UN agencies updated on your UPR work and endeavour to meet with them ahead of their submission drafting. Advocate for the inclusion of UPR recommendations into United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks (UNDAF) and Common Country Programmes to ensure that implementation is mainstreamed throughout the entire UN country team.

Cooperating

For the UPR to be an effective mechanism and further enable the realisation of human rights across the world cooperation and transparency between all stakeholders throughout the UPR is essential. *UPR Info* therefore encourages government officials from the SuR, civil society actors, NHRIs, the media, UN agencies, and delegates from RS to engage in “Multi-stakeholder Dialogue on UPR Implementation”. These events are designed to bring together all national UPR stakeholders to discuss the implementation of UPR recommendations. CSOs, at this stage, can present their expectations and plans to support implementation, ideally in the form of a joint implementation strategy.

Mongolia

In Mongolia in 2015, members of the Government and CSOs met to discuss how to engage in inclusive and effective implementation of recommendations. A representative from the Ministry of Justice, expressed the commitment of the Government to work on human rights issues, as well as the implementation of the recommendations made to Mongolia and encouraged a constructive dialogue with CSOs on the necessary activities. The UN Resident Coordinator underlined the importance of all stakeholders working together and the need to link the National Action Plan to the development agenda. Ms. Urantsooj Gombosuren from the Open Society Forum highlighted the fundamental role CSOs play in the implementation process. She also stressed the added value of having a joint strategy, in which all stakeholders are involved, and the importance of understanding the needs of the other actors. Finally, *UPR Info* underlined the importance to work together so as to ensure that human rights are promoted and protected. At this event CSOs presented the Implementation Matrix to Government officials.

UPR Info encourages the production of a “Letter of Cooperation”, between the SuR and CSOs, which details the joint steps towards implementation.²⁵ While the content is decided by the stakeholders, a good practice is to include **regular CSO-government meetings** and a commitment to submit a **joint CSO-government mid-term report** to OHCHR.

²⁵ An example of the [Letter of Cooperation](#) is available on *UPR Info*'s website.

Reporting

Reporting to the HRC

At any time, from the adoption of the UPR Working Group Report of the SuR until its next UPR, CSOs with ECOSOC status can report to the HRC on the progress made in the implementation of recommendations. This can be done by way of a written statement or by organising a side event. CSOs can deliver, individually or through a joint statement with an accredited organisation, an oral statement during the 'Item 6' General Debate to provide the HRC with a 2 minute update on the actions of a specific State in regards to their implementation.



The OHCHR prepares guidelines for CSO involvement with the HRC, and specifically oral statements, which are available here:
<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/Pages/NgoParticipation.aspx>

Submitting Mid-term Reports

At the half way point of the cycle the SuR is expected to submit a Mid-term report on UPR implementation. 'Other Stakeholders' are also encouraged to submit similar reports at Mid-term.

The process of writing a report at mid-term should take stock of the implementation rate to-date, assess the efficiency of undertaken activities, and suggest solutions to obstacles. Unlike Stakeholder Submissions, there are very few restrictions on mid-term reports. There is no word limit and no specific format. Many CSOs have submitted tables that detail, for each recommendation, the measures taken by the SuR and whether or not they consider the recommendation to be implemented. Usually, implementation is categorised into three levels: fully, partially, and not implemented. Some mid-term reports favour using a 'traffic light' system, to effectively display the rate of implementation of recommendations, and assessing recommendations thematically.

The Americans for Democracy and Human Rights in Bahrain (ADHRB) report developed the traffic light idea to monitor implementation.



ADHRB’s report explains the methodology used to analyse the implementation of UPR recommendations: “Assessments came from a range of sources, including: first-hand accounts from individuals on the ground in Bahrain, second-hand sources that have been fact-checked or independently verified where possible, and by referencing official reporting done by both governmental and non-governmental bodies.” Following the ‘traffic light’ analysis and the methodology the report goes on to address the UPR recommendations thematically.²⁶

“An Assessment by Stakeholders of Government’s Performance in Implementation of UPR Recommendations” submitted by Kenyan CSOs in 2012 also utilised the traffic light system. After the analysis of recommendations, again presented thematically, the report also provides links to the subsequent bills, legislative decisions, and UN Treaty Body reports.²⁷

UPR Info believes that mid-term reporting is an opportunity for States and CSOs to collaborate further for UPR implementation. The process of writing a joint Government-CSO Mid-term Report can provide an important trust-building exercise between the actors. *UPR Info* calls for Mid-term Reports from the SuR to include clear input from civil society and NRHIs.



When writing reports refer to the UPR Info database of recommendations:
<https://www.upr-info.org/database/>.

- Conduct widespread consultations with diverse CSOs to collect credible first-hand information.
- Meet with other CSOs and implementation partners, such as UN Agencies and NHRIs, and present your report to the UN agencies, NHRI for feedback.
- A lack of implementation in your organisation’s area of interest may be a sign of general lack of implementation.



Analyse and report on the implementation rate at mid-term and share findings with all UPR stakeholders.

²⁶ The [ADHRB mid-term report](#) is available on *UPR Info*’s website.

²⁷ The [Kenyan Stakeholders Progress Report](#) is available on *UPR Info*’s website.



Civil Society Coalitions at the UPR

UPR Info has found that the CSOs that achieve maximum impact at the UPR tend to be those working in national and/or international coalitions. Building CSO coalitions should be a priority, in order to safeguard meaningful civil society influence on the UPR process. As explained in **Part 1** of this guide, the modalities of the UPR openly recognise the legitimate need for civil society, and encourages their constructive input, in the process. Within the UPR there is ample room for multiple civil society actors, many of whom share either common goals, for example working on the same human rights issue; common partners, for example working with rural communities; or common ground, for example working in the same province or country, or all of the above. Over the past years CSOs have joined forces with the common aim to bring about positive human rights changes on the ground and thus thriving CSO UPR coalitions have developed.

It must be stressed that not one CSO coalition will be a carbon copy of another. The reality of different contexts such as countries, political, economic, or social environments, leads to CSO coalitions taking on unique forms but with a common mission; to support one another's work to ensure the advancement of human rights through the implementation of UPR recommendations.

The benefits of working in a coalition

CSOs working on human rights are frequently members of civil society networks that engage with different national and international mechanisms to achieve their goals. As a consequence of the broad scope of human rights that are examined during the UPR, thematic and cross-thematic CSO coalition-building has been popularised. CSOs working on the same human rights issues or with common ground, such as geographical location, have in many contexts joined coalitions to share knowledge and resources to benefit the wider cause; the realisation of human rights.

Step-by-step benefits of working in a CSO coalition throughout the UPR



Best practices of UPR Coalitions

CSO coalitions are better equipped to establish and sustain fruitful cooperation with governments throughout the UPR cycle. Their inclusiveness and ability to speak with a uniform voice often renders their movement more credible and legitimate when compared to individual organisations. The work of a coalition is less vulnerable to staff turnover and better protected from knowledge gaps due to their capability to pool human and financial resources from a number of CSOs. Coalitions have often taken a leading role in the “broad consultation process at the national level with all relevant stakeholders” that States are expected to implement in an inclusive way ahead of their UPR in line with resolution A/HRC/RES/5/1.

Aside from the step-by-step benefits of working in UPR coalitions, *UPR Info* has identified three key areas in which working in coalitions can further improve the outputs of CSO when engaging with the UPR. The following case studies highlight certain areas and activities that UPR coalitions have developed in order to achieve their UPR and human rights related vision.



For an in depth analysis of the case studies documented below please consult *UPR Info*'s publication, *The Butterfly Effect: Spreading Good Practices of UPR Implementation*.

Impact

1. Cooperation

Cooperation and dialogue between all UPR stakeholders, as mentioned in previous sections of this guide, is encouraged by the founding HRC resolution of the UPR mechanism.

A. Coalition Cooperation

For UPR coalitions to be effective, the CSO members must develop good professional relationships internally.



Impact Assessment Workshop in Thailand, 2015.

Thailand

Over 100 Thai activists, from 64 CSOs, first submitted a joint CSO submission, in 2015, to Thailand's second UPR. Strengthened by this experience the informal network took a decisive step towards initiating the formation of the Thai CSOs Coalition for the UPR, through a workshop co-organised by *UPR Info*. It was jointly agreed by organisers and participants that forming a CSO coalition would maximise the potential of effectively engaging in Thailand's second UPR. The event gathered 138 participants in total, and included the NHRI and representatives from UN agencies.

In the early stages of its formalisation, the coalition benefitted from regional meetings, co-organised by *UPR Info*, in which CSO leaders from UPR coalitions in Myanmar, Mongolia and Malaysia shared their rich experiences on coalition building. In the run-up to Thailand’s review, the coalition participated in pre-sessions in both Bangkok and Geneva. This two-pronged approach maximised the influence of CSO suggested recommendations and resulted in sense of shared achievements among the coalition.

One year after the first meeting, the Thai CSOs Coalition for the UPR was formally established and it was decided that a core team of five members representing different organisations and regions should function as a secretariat. The Thai CSOs Coalition for the UPR has enabled an unprecedented number of local communities to strengthen their advocacy and capacity in parallel to contributing to the ultimate aim of the UPR; to improve human rights on the ground. Thai CSOs have seized this unique opportunity to build solidarity and to address challenges on similar topics such as land evictions, land grabbing, and abusive working conditions across the country. The constructive approach of the coalition has positioned it as a legitimate national movement equipped to collaborate with the Government.

B. Coalition and Government Cooperation

Relationships between the State and civil society are constantly changing and are shaped by the nature of the political, economic, and social landscape of a country. Cooperation between government and CSOs must go beyond a mere facade to have a tangible impact. As mentioned in previous sections of this guide, States are urged to consult broadly with CSOs ahead of the drafting and submission of the National Report. Presenting a united front, ensuring efficient professional practices, and developing well thought-out UPR strategies also increases the political influence of the CSO coalition.



Multistakeholder National dialogue in Mongolia, 2015.

Ireland

Ahead of Ireland’s first UPR in 2011, the Government conducted regional public consultations, typically lasting for 2–3 hours, in several locations. Members of the public were informed through advertisements, and the State invited the NHRI and several CSOs to make presentations before inviting comments from the floor. Your Rights. Right Now (YRRN), a coalition of 17 civil society organisations, also invited the Government to attend three regional consultations with members of the public ahead of Ireland’s second UPR examination.

Nepal

The Government engaged in consultations with civil society after its first UPR of Nepal in 2011, which resulted in an informal multi-stakeholder forum comprising of representatives from all ministries, members of parliament, UN agencies, INGOs, the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC), the Dalit and Women NHRCs and national CSOs. This forum met twice to discuss implementation but a change in Government lead to the discontinuation of the initiative. Encouragingly, consultations took place between the Government and civil society during the drafting of Nepal's second National Report. In the second cycle, all stakeholders, with the support of *UPR Info*, constructed an implementation plan containing S.M.A.R.T indicators for tracking implementation of recommendations. This was submitted to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and followed up with two consultative meetings with a host of Government institutions. As a result, the Government's second cycle implementation plan is more robust than their first cycle implementation plan.



Multistakeholder National dialogue in Nepal, 2016.

Mongolia

Ahead of Mongolia's second review, the State tried to offer a superficial, highly restrictive consultation, where civil society would not have had adequate time to review the national report with a view towards meaningful feedback (there was only one week before the State's deadline). As such, civil society refused to engage at all, compelling the Government to rethink its strategy. In the end, Mongolia requested an extension of one month from the OHCHR in order to provide a meaningful national consultation with its civil society.

Thailand

The *Thai CSOs Coalition for the UPR* noted a clear shift in the way that the Government approached them as a coalition compared to when they acted as individual organisations. In an unprecedented step, the coalition was invited to present their views on the recommendations that Thailand received, after their second UPR in May 2016, to the SuR. Due to its constructive solution-oriented approach, the Thai CSOs Coalition for the UPR gained credibility and legitimacy in Thailand. For the first

time, civil society and the Government have embarked on joint discussions on how to improve human rights in the country. This illustrates the power of the UPR; the possibility to create avenues for human rights discussions between UPR stakeholders even under a military junta.

C. Coalition and Cooperation with Other Stakeholders

Cooperation is often underpinned by personal relationships built up and sustained over time. Over the course of the UPR it has proved vital for civil society to identify key parliamentarians and actors of change within the administration to use as entry points to ministries in charge of implementing UPR recommendations.

Nepal

The Informal Sector Service Center for Human Rights and Social Justice (INSEC) is appealing to parliamentarians and the Parliamentary Human Rights Committee to be more attentive on the UPR and to bring up UPR recommendations for discussion in parliament. INSEC also provides parliamentarians with documentation on the UPR and the role of the parliament in promoting implementation of recommendations. INSEC deems that their advocacy has been successful and that parliamentarians are increasingly sensitive to human right issues. It is clear that there is space for involvement of parliamentarians in the UPR and civil society needs to strengthen its cooperation with parliamentarians as they are in an ideal position to keep the UPR on the agenda of the legislative, executive and judicial branches of the state throughout the full UPR cycle.

While it is generally appreciated that the UPR has contributed to strengthening relations between civil society and governments, each state is characterised by its unique dynamic in terms of cooperation between UPR stakeholders. The spectrum ranges from joint UPR implementation plans, to non-existing communications between civil society and the government. Governments across the globe are not always willing to engage with civil society on certain human rights issues however the UPR mechanism continues to call on States to engage in dialogue with civil society and NHRIs can play a key role in facilitating this dialogue. Their independent assessment of the human rights situation in the state is invaluable to the functioning of the mechanism.



Uganda CSO Engagement Workshop Press Conference, 2016.

India

During the window between the first and second UPR cycle, the Government of India, and in particular the Ministry of External Affairs, was open to collaboration with civil society and the NHRIs. This space was seized by the Working Group on Human Rights in India and the UN (WGHR) CSO coalition to, for the first time, bring together India's nine NHRIs which resulted in the WGHR and the NHRIs creating separate monitoring tools to track implementation of UPR recommendations.

2. Advocacy and Implementation

Niche, new, underrepresented or emerging human rights issues can be hard to raise in the UPR due to RS's preferred and traditional issues. It is however noteworthy that, by invoking a comprehensive advocacy strategy, CSO coalitions have succeeded in raising underrepresented issues in the UPR.

Benin

Together with national partner organisations, the Franciscans International utilised the UPR, the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Human Rights Committee (HRC) to address the infanticide in Benin. In Benin's first UPR, the Holy See made a recommendation on the issue, which was accepted. In 2010, Franciscans International travelled to Benin to organise a roundtable with UN agencies, the European Union, CSOs, and the Government to raise awareness on the issue, and highlight the recommendation. This event triggered a host of awareness raising activities by Franciscans International's local partners. Ahead of Benin's second UPR in 2012, Franciscans International shifted focus from awareness raising to advocating for legislative measures such as criminalising ritual killings of so-called 'witch children' in the penal code. Franciscans International, on behalf of national CSOs advocated for action oriented recommendations and Benin received 14 recommendations related to ritual infanticide of children accused of witchcraft.

Mongolia

As part of the advocacy on the human rights of small-scale miners, members of the MHRN Forum utilised the *UPR Info Pre-session* to inform the diplomatic community in Geneva about the issue. During the second UPR of Mongolia in 2015, Hungary and Switzerland made specific recommendations on the topic which were accepted by the Government. As a follow-up, members of the MHRN Forum reiterated the need for implementation of these recommendations at a roundtable discussion with the donor and diplomatic community in Ulaan Bator. The MHRN was the first CSO UPR Coalition

to develop Advocacy Factsheets (as discussed in **Part 3**) and therefore provide up to date information on human rights issues and report on implementation of recommendations in easily digestible and accessible factsheets, broken down thematically.

Sustainability

1. Structure

The degree to which CSO coalitions are formalised varies significantly and is often linked to funding and political considerations. The choice to register a coalition often depends on the national context and domestic legislation. In some case there are benefits to registering a legal entity and in other context the process can have far less of an impact. Of the CSOs and coalitions that *UPR Info* has worked with the organisations have benefited more from their internal structuring, rather than their formal or informal registration.

A. Secretariat

A secretariat for the CSO UPR coalition ensures the group develops an institutional memory, and maintains effective professional standards such as; periodic meeting and event coordination; minute taking and circulation; and rotating locations to facilitate engagement from dispersed partners.

Nepal

The National Coalition for the UPR employs INSEC as its permanent secretariat to coordinate the coalition and support the work of the members through training programmes, having provided training on gender-sensitive budgeting, and outreach programmes, when engaging with parliamentarians. INSEC works to coordinate the coalition's UPR activities, with those of other implementation partners, to strengthen cooperation with the Government and therefore implementation.

UPR-UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW FACTSHEET

DISCRIMINATION AND STIGMA AGAINST PEOPLE LIVING WITH HIV/AIDS

The Laws on Healthcare and HIV/AIDS Prevention enacted in 2011 and 2012 respectively, have stated a policy of non-discrimination in delivering healthcare service provision to the population, and the newly-developed drafts of the Law on Crime and Labor Law contain progressive provisions prohibiting discrimination. Nevertheless, the implementation of the laws remains inadequate, and the National Committee on AIDS in charge of this issue has, to this day, not been established. The shortcomings associated with inadequate knowledge, contrary attitudes, insufficient information and frequent staff turnover among civil servants responsible for developing and implementing the policy governing and protecting the rights of people living with HIV/AIDS remain widespread.

The most commonly violated rights of people living with HIV/AIDS:

- To remain free from discrimination;
- To have one's health protected and receive healthcare service provision;
- To have personal information kept private;
- To work;
- To receive a fair trial.

CHALLENGES	CASES, FACTS, COMMENTS
Mongolia does not have a stand-alone anti-discrimination law. Direct and indirect discrimination of people living with HIV/AIDS is commonplace. The grounds stated in Article 14.2 of the Constitution of Mongolia on which discrimination is prohibited do not mention health-based discrimination, which underscores the absence of a legal framework for people living with HIV/AIDS to remain safe from discrimination. The lack of the legal environment has led to a continuing practice of adopting rules and regulations discriminating against people living with HIV/AIDS. The practice of demanding mandatory testing for HIV/AIDS is extensive. For example, there are procedures requiring HIV/AIDS testing for persons applying for a job, wanting to use public swimming pools, and undergoing a surgery.	Article 11.5 of the HIV/AIDS Prevention Law which states that "the degree of working ability loss for a person with HIV/AIDS shall be determined under Article 30 of the Law on Occupational Safety and Hygiene and Article 5.15 of the current law" is a form of employment discrimination. The spread of HIV/AIDS is considered a crime and is punishable by law. Provisions to this end are contained in Article 105.3 of the current Criminal Code and Article 15.5 of the Draft Law on Crime. Citizen "D" has resigned upon learning about the upcoming workplace HIV/AIDS testing. The resignation was prompted by fear of being discriminated against by co-workers who might find out about higher condition.

Mongolia Factsheet created by Human Rights NGO Forum to the UN, 2014.

Mongolia

The MHRN Forum has not registered their coalition but established, in 2015, a structure in which the secretarial duties rotate among members on a monthly basis. This includes coordinating UPR activities, and managing the intra-coalition communications.



Mongolia CSO Engagement Workshop, 2015.

B. Terms of Reference

Creating Terms of Reference (ToRs)

means that when CSOs want to join the coalition the parameters of the coalition and code of conduct within the group is easily accessible and can be agreed upon before membership to the coalition is granted. ToRs are also a set of core professional standards that can benefit coalitions in lieu of registration documents and procedures.

Ireland

Members of the Irish UPR coalition Your Rights Right Now (YRRN) drew up the ToRs to formalise their work, but have chosen not to register as a legal entity. The ToRs served to level the expectations of all those involved, and any organisations looking to join the coalition.

2. Fundraising

Regrettably, no official UPR fund currently exists to support CSOs UPR activities, however some States have made excellent use of the UPR Voluntary Fund for Financial and Technical Assistance (UPR Voluntary Fund) in implementing UPR recommendations.²⁸ Civil society funding in many instances is not easy to obtain and fundraising takes up a large proportion of staff resources for many CSOs. When working on the UPR, or more broadly in the area of human rights, many donors will not extend financial support to unregistered CSOs, and funding bodies often favour the work of coalitions due to their improved professional standards and broader representation of human rights issues.

Bolivia

The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) in Bolivia has provided support to CSO led initiatives geared at bolstering implementation of first cycle UPR recommendations and strengthening CSO cooperation ahead of the State's

²⁸ More information on the impact of the [UPR Voluntary Fund](#) is available online.

second cycle review. SDC's engagement contributed to nationwide consultations involving 542 CSOs, the NHRI and Government officials. Beyond the domestic scope, capacity building efforts undertaken by the SDC enhanced CSOs advocacy at the international level, which influenced the recommendations of States participating in the UPR of Bolivia. Moreover, the SDC in Bolivia contributed to shaping Switzerland's recommendations to Bolivia with a view to establish synergies between UPR recommendations and programs within its human rights and justice portfolio, thus strengthening bilateral cooperation.

Malaysia

For the first two cycles of the UPR, members of The Coalition of Malaysian NGOs in the UPR Process (COMANGO) pooled financial resources on a voluntary basis to cover their UPR activities, combined with limited periods where they received funding to carry out consultations. Since 2015, COMANGO receives funding through one of its co-secretariats EMPOWER, a three-year grantee of the Commonwealth Foundation, through which it can monitor the improvement of human rights in Malaysia.

3. UPR and the Sustainable Development Goals

There are considerable overlaps between the UPR and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), and consequently, implementation of one mechanism reinforces the other. The implementation of the SDGs contributes to the realisation of a vast array of human rights and, by combining the political will secured in the UPR with the financial backing of the SDGs, a promising foundation for sustainable implementation of human rights and development goals can be achieved. As many UPR recommendations are directly related to the goals and targets of the SDGs, it follows that several of the SDG indicators set out to monitor implementation of the goals and targets also lend themselves as indicators for tracking implementation of UPR recommendations. To *UPR Info's* best knowledge, no government has yet mainstreamed the SDGs into their UPR work. Hence, much space remains to fully utilise the mutually reinforcing dynamic between the two elements. If the trend of successfully merging the development agenda with UPR recommendations continues to be championed by CSOs and UPR coalitions it adds a further incentive for States to replicate the procedure.



Coordination meeting with UPR Stakeholders, Tanzania, 2016.

Solidarity

On a daily basis, civil society actors around the world risk their lives to further the situation of human rights. In many States, the safe and enabling environment which is necessary for a thriving civil society is far from a reality and cases of reprisals against HRDs are a common phenomenon for many. Some UPR recommendations seek to address this issue, and the UN generally takes a strong stance against any crackdowns against the work of CSOs and HRDs. For many, there is a shrinking space within which civil society can operate. In these circumstances the work of CSO UPR coalitions is key to ensure civil society actors have a safe space in which to work in solidarity with one another. There have been instances where working within a coalition has protected the people and projects from adverse actions of the State. Being part of a UPR coalition can offer safety in numbers.

Malaysia

COMANGO describes this process of coming together under one umbrella as an exercise strongly underpinned by an unprecedented notion of solidarity between CSOs. Working in coalitions has allowed CSOs working on the same issues in different regions to come together in smaller coalitions as well as providing a nationwide and inclusive UPR platform that encompasses CSOs advocating for all human rights. Through *COMANGO*, CSOs have also been able to work on issues that were otherwise unsafe to work on, such as LGBTI rights and ending SOGI discrimination, as the coalition has been able to provide these groups with protection when the State tried to prevent progress in these fields.



Tools and Resources

Utilising UPR Info's Database and Statistics

UPR Info has catalogued every recommendation ever made at the UPR in order to ensure awareness of recommendations and facilitate the effective monitoring of their implementation.

The Database of Recommendations is available at <https://www.upr-info.org/database/>

Database of Recommendations

UPR Info's Database of UPR recommendations and voluntary pledges allows you to access and search all UPR recommendations and voluntary pledges across several categories: State under Review, Recommending State, Regional Group, Organisation, Response, UPR cycle, Thematic Issues, and Type of Action. Some of them are exclusive to this unique database developed by UPR Info. To learn how to use the database, read our [help guide](#) (en français aussi).

Names of columns:
SuR - State under Review
RS - Recommending State
A - Action
C - Cycle

Action categories:
1 - Minimal action
2 - Continuing action
3 - Considering action
4 - General action
5 - Specific action

Search & filters

State under Review: **All** | Recommending State: **All** | Issue: **All** | Cycle: **All cycles**

Recommendations & Voluntary Pledges: **Recommendations only** | Max. results: **100** | **Advanced search and tools**

Search keyword(s) in recommendations: **GO** **Reset**

State under Review	Recommending State	Issue	Response	
<input type="checkbox"/> Afghanistan <input type="checkbox"/> Albania <input type="checkbox"/> Algeria <input type="checkbox"/> Andorra <input type="checkbox"/> Angola <input type="checkbox"/> Antigua and Barbuda <hr/> SuR - Regional Groups <input type="checkbox"/> Africa: African Group <input type="checkbox"/> Asia: Asian Group <input type="checkbox"/> EEU: Eastern European Group <input type="checkbox"/> GRULAC: Group of Latin American and Caribbean States <input type="checkbox"/> WEOG: Western European and	<input type="checkbox"/> (Unknown) <input type="checkbox"/> Afghanistan <input type="checkbox"/> Albania <input type="checkbox"/> Algeria <input type="checkbox"/> Andorra <input type="checkbox"/> Angola <hr/> SuR - Organisations <input type="checkbox"/> ACS: Association of Caribbean States <input type="checkbox"/> AL: League of Arab States <input type="checkbox"/> ASEAN: Association of Southeast Asian Nations <input type="checkbox"/> AU: African Union <input type="checkbox"/> CIS: Commonwealth of Independent	<input type="checkbox"/> Asylum-seekers - refugees <input type="checkbox"/> Business and human rights <input type="checkbox"/> CP rights - general <input type="checkbox"/> Civil society <input type="checkbox"/> Corruption <input type="checkbox"/> Counter-terrorism <hr/> RS - Regional Groups <input type="checkbox"/> Africa: African Group <input type="checkbox"/> Asia: Asian Group <input type="checkbox"/> EEU: Eastern European Group <input type="checkbox"/> GRULAC: Group of Latin American and Caribbean States <input type="checkbox"/> Observer <hr/> RS - Organisations <input type="checkbox"/> ACS: Association of Caribbean States <input type="checkbox"/> AL: League of Arab States <input type="checkbox"/> ASEAN: Association of Southeast Asian Nations <input type="checkbox"/> AU: African Union <input type="checkbox"/> CIS: Commonwealth of Independent	<input type="checkbox"/> Accepted <input type="checkbox"/> Noted <hr/> Action Category <input type="checkbox"/> 1 - Minimal action <input type="checkbox"/> 2 - Continuing action <input type="checkbox"/> 3 - Considering action <input type="checkbox"/> 4 - General action <input type="checkbox"/> 5 - Specific action <hr/> Session <input type="checkbox"/> 25 - May 2016 <input type="checkbox"/> 24 - January 2016 <input type="checkbox"/> 23 - October 2015 <input type="checkbox"/> 22 - May 2015 <input type="checkbox"/> 21 - January 2015 <input type="checkbox"/> 20 - October 2014 <input type="checkbox"/> 19 - May 2014 <input type="checkbox"/> 18 - January 2014 <hr/> Cycle <input type="checkbox"/> Cycle 2 (2012 - 2016) <input type="checkbox"/> Cycle 1 (2008 - 2012) <p><small>This selection will affect the "Session" option on the left-hand side.</small></p>	<hr/> Tools <input type="button" value="Export to xls"/> <input type="button" value="Link to your current results"/>

Using the 'Advance search and tools' function one can easily filter the database, of over 55,000 recommendations, to focus on specific areas of interest. These results can also be exported for further analysis.

Similarly *UPR Info* has developed a Statistics page which also improves analysis of UPR interaction and recommendations. The Statistics of Recommendations is available at <https://www.upr-info.org/database/statistics/>

Statistics of Recommendations

The unique *UPR Info's statistics of UPR recommendations* allows you to access statistics drawn from our database of UPR recommendations across several categories: State under Review, Recommending State, Regional Group, Organisation, Response, UPR Session, UPR cycle, thematic issue and type of action. These statistics allow you to easily find the most active States, the issues raised the most, and much more useful information for your participation in the UPR. Each table is organised from highest to lowest by number of recommendations made or received. Feel free to make use of data provided for your own use. You may contact us with any queries or feedback at this email address: info@upr-info.org.

Select a type of statistic: Global Statistics
Select a Cycle: All cycles

A total of **55,225** recommendations from session **1** to **25** were made (two UPR cycles).
 A total of **19,750** recommendations containing a specific action (category 5) were made.
 A total of **22** countries did not make any recommendation.

<p>The top 5 States under Review are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. United States 🇺🇸 (668) 2. Cuba 🇨🇺 (534) 3. Iran 🇮🇷 (511) 4. Sudan 🇸🇩 (503) 5. Egypt 🇪🇬 (492) 	<p>The top 5 recommending States are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. France 🇫🇷 (1,708) 2. Spain 🇪🇸 (1,589) 3. Canada 🇨🇦 (1,490) 4. Norway 🇳🇴 (1,255) 5. Mexico 🇲🇽 (1,238) 	<p>The top 5 issues raised are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. International instruments (12,150) 2. Women's rights (10,258) 3. Rights of the Child (9,656) 4. Torture and other CID treatment (4,328) 5. Justice (4,144)
---	---	---

How to use this statistics page
 Click on a title to display a table arranged from highest to lowest number of recommendations made or received. Some categories provide additional options such as a chart or a link to our UPR database.

Both tools are free for public use and should be used by CSOs throughout the course of the UPR:

- When drafting submissions, to refer to previous recommendations and responses,
- To identify RS for advocacy programmes.

UPR Advocacy Checklist



TIP #1

Prioritise issues and recommendations. The most effective advocacy focuses on three to four issues with five to six recommendations. Highlight positive developments and where further action is needed for the implementation of UPR recommendations.



TIP #3

Prepare Advocacy Factsheets. Include a short explanation for each priority issue highlighting why the issue should be raised and the supporting evidence.



TIP #5

Distribute Advocacy Factsheets. Follow-up with those Stakeholders that have access to the Factsheets to offer any additional information.



TIP #7

Link the UPR to other human rights mechanisms. Substantiate the S.M.A.R.T recommendations by referencing international human right bodies, such as Treaty bodies, Special Rapporteurs, the SDGs, and other UN mechanisms that are relevant.



TIP #2

Be clear about your objectives. Strike a balance, when proposing recommendations, between recommendations the RS will incorporate and recommendations that adequately address issue to be resolved. If the RS addressed a similar issue in the previous circle, provide an update on the situation and follow-up recommendations.



TIP #4

Pose draft recommendations. Suggest S.M.A.R.T recommendations using a similar language to previous recommendations.



TIP #6

Target advocacy at RS. Identify sympathetic States and key delegates and arrange to meet them. Briefly explain your work and why/how you are qualified to work on this topic and then provide them a brief explanation of the situation on the ground in the SuR.



TIP #8

Identify gate-keepers in the SuR. The government on the SuR will have specific departments/ministers dedicated to the UPR, contact them to offer support in implementation. Also reach out to parliamentarians who may be engaged with the UPR.

S.M.A.R.T Recommendations

The SMART method adds helpful criteria for writing precise and action-oriented recommendations. These should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound.

Specific

The specific dimension is meant to address a well-defined action in relation to a specific right or violation.

To do:	Establish a system of data collection which would allow a stock-taking of the situation of immigrant problems in areas such as employment and access to public office
	Conduct an awareness-raising campaign to ban violence against women
To avoid:	Ratify outstanding core international human rights instruments [...].
	Ratify or accede to CAT, OP-CAT, ICCPR, and lift its broad reservations to CEDAW and CRC

Measurable

A measurable recommendation is a recommendation that can be assessed. Was the recommendation implemented or not? Recommendations that look at the result to be achieved, rather than specific actions to reach this result are most often poorly measurable.

To do:	Raise the age of criminal responsibility for juvenile offenders to at least 12 years, in line with the CRC's general comment
	Establish a national human rights institution in accordance with the Paris Principles
To avoid:	Take all appropriate measures to address violence against indigenous women

Moreover, Recommending States should choose their wording carefully. To assess a recommendation suggesting “to sign and ratify the protocol” is not the same as “to ratify the protocol”; the first one can be considered as partially implemented if the State signs “the protocol”, unlike the second one.

To do:	Ratify the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court
To avoid:	Sign and ratify CRPD and OP-CEDAW

Achievable

The achievable aspect is determined by the capacity of a state to comply with the recommendation. Such a limit should be defined only by material means, not by political will. In this regard, it is pragmatic to make precise recommendations that include step-by-step actions, while aiming for a bigger objective in the long run.

To do:	Increase the annual budget allocations for health section in order to provide for quality healthcare as well as adequate education, training and salaries for medical and paramedical staff
---------------	---

Relevant

Relevance refers to the link between the recommendation and the situation in the country.

To do:	Fully implement the Decade of Roma Inclusion 2005-2015 Programme to address all forms of discrimination against the Roma people and to improve the conditions of Roma settlements
	Promulgate draft law 2817, approved by the Philippine Senate in July 2011, which defines and sanctions enforced disappearances
To avoid:	Continue to exercise its sovereign right of implementing its laws and legislation, including on the death penalty, in conformity with the universally agreed human rights standards and norms

Time-bound

Lastly, the time-bound is related to a time frame during which the recommendation is expected to be implemented. It is understood that all recommendations should be implemented by the next review but shorter deadlines can be imposed.

To do:	Submit to human rights treaty bodies those reports which are overdue within one year
To avoid:	Consider, when possible, to gradually increase financial resources allocated to the budget of the Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission

Participation at the United Nations

ECOSOC

Only CSOs in consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC status) can be accredited to participate in the HRC’s sessions as Observers. As an ‘observer’, CSOs are able to:

- Attend and observe all HRC proceedings, with the exception of the HRC deliberations under the Complaints Procedure;
- Submit written statements to the HRC;
- Make oral interventions to the HRC, specifically under Item 6 for UPR statements;
- Participate in debates, interactive dialogues, panel discussions and informal meetings; and
- Organise “parallel events”, also known as side events, on issues relevant to the work of the HRC.

For more information:

- Read the Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31 of July 1996
<http://www.un.org/documents/ecosoc/res/1996/eres1996-31.htm>
- Check your CSO in the ECOSOC CSO database
<http://esango.un.org/civilsociety/displayAdvancedSearch.do?method=search&sessionCheck=false>
- For information on how your CSO can apply for ECOSOC consultative status
<http://esango.un.org/paperless/Web?page=static&content=intro>

UPR Submissions

When drafting a UPR submission be sure to follow the OHCHR guidelines:

- Written submissions must not exceed 2,815 words for individual submissions, and 5,630 words for joint submissions. There is no upper word limit for references or annexes; however, this information will not be included in the stakeholder's summary.
- Include information covering the period since the last review (4.5–5 years).
- The content of the submission can cover any number of topics but should ideally relate to the concerns that your organisation has the most experience with. There is no limit to the number of issues you can raise in the space allowed but the strongest submissions are usually focused on just a few issues and present enough clear evidence to make their case.
- The submission should contain concrete S.M.A.R.T recommendations for action by the SuR.
- You may want to consider linking your submission to findings from other human rights mechanisms (treaty bodies, special procedures) to lend weight to your evidence.
- Include a completed Matrix as an addendum to your submission.

The Matrix

Other stakeholders are encouraged to download their country matrix, complete the final column in the table, and submit it in addition to their written submission, the word count of which is not affected by comments added to the matrices. The matrix provides a list of received recommendations, clustered by theme, and then allows space for “Assessment/comments on level of implementation”.

The country specific matrices are accessible from *UPR Info*'s website once they have been made available from

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Pages/NgosNhris.aspx>

Important note: all UPR submissions must be submitted and received (through the On-line system for registration of contributions) not later than the day of the given deadline (3:00 p.m.). Late submissions will not be considered. Should organizations encounter technical problems using the Online system, please contact the UPR Submissions Helpdesk through the following email address: uprsubmissions@ohchr.org.

UPR Working Group sessions	Tentative deadlines for "Other Stakeholders" (and UN entities) to submit written contributions	Matrices of recommendations of countries to be reviewed during the 3rd cycle of the UPR
27th session (Apr-May 2017)	22 Sept. 2016 (confirmed)	Bahrain, Ecuador, Tunisia, Morocco, Indonesia, Finland, United Kingdom, India, Brazil, Philippines, Algeria, Poland, Netherlands, South Africa
28th session (Oct-Nov 2017)	30 March 2017 (confirmed)	Czech Republic, Argentina, Gabon, Ghana, Peru, Guatemala, Benin, Republic of Korea, Switzerland, Pakistan, Zambia, Japan, Ukraine and Sri Lanka
29th session (Jan-Feb 2018)	29 June 2017 (confirmed)	France, Tonga, Romania, Mali, Botswana, Bahamas, Burundi, Luxembourg, Barbados, Montenegro, United Arab Emirates, Israel, Liechtenstein, Serbia

Style of the submission

- Avoid language that is subjective or emotional.
- Do not include pictures, maps, organisations' annual reports or reports from other organisations as annexes to the submission.
- Do not use too many footnotes.

Structure of the submission:

- Include a cover page which identifies all submitting stakeholders (letterhead, name and acronym, logo, website, etc.) and describes the main activities of the organisation/coalition, as well as its date of establishment, especially if the CSO is engaging with the UN for the first time.
- Include an introductory executive summary capturing the main points described and/or indicate key words to help the OHCHR understand what the submission is about (e.g. right to education).
- Number the paragraphs and pages of the submission.

Sending the UPR submission:

- Send the written submission as a Word document only (i.e. not as a PDF file).

- Register on the OHCHR “On-line UPR Submissions System” at <http://uprdoc.ohchr.org>. Registration can be done at any time and you do not need to wait for the deadline.
- When you have finalised your submission, login to the “On-line UPR Submissions System” and upload it.

Written, Video, and Oral Statements

The OHCHR guide to submitting written statements to the Human Rights Council is available for [download](#).

The OHCHR guide to submitting video statements to the Human Rights Council is available for [download](#).

The OHCHR oral statement registration guide and links are available under the heading ‘Quick Links, 4’ on the [OHCHR website](#).

UPR Info Publications

- The Butterfly Effect:
https://www.upr-info.org/sites/default/files/general-document/pdf/2016_the_butterfly_effect.pdf
- UPR Info Pre-sessions:
https://www.upr-info.org/sites/default/files/general-document/pdf/2016_pre-sessions_empowering_human_rights_voices_from_the_ground_fr.pdf
- Beyond Promises:
https://www.upr-info.org/sites/default/files/general-document/pdf/2014_beyond_promises.pdf
- Guide for Recommending States:
https://www.upr-info.org/sites/default/files/general-document/pdf/upr_info_guide_for_recommending_states_2015_fr.pdf

OHCHR Publications

- A Handbook for Civil Society:
http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/AboutUs/CivilSociety/OHCHR_Handbook_Fr.pdf
- Civil Society Space and the United Nations Human Rights System:
http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/AboutUs/CivilSociety/CS_space_UNHRSYSTEM_Guide.pdf
- United Nations Human Rights Council:
http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRCouncil/PracticalGuideNGO_en.pdf

- Universal Periodic Review:
<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/PracticalGuideCivilSociety.pdf>
- How to Follow Up On United Nations Human Rights Recommendations:
<http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/AboutUs/CivilSociety/HowtoFollowUNHRRRecommendations.pdf>
- Human Rights Funds, Grants and Fellowships:
http://www.ohchr.org/Documents/AboutUs/CivilSociety/OHCHRFundsGuide_en.pdf

Useful links

UPR Info

Multiple CSO coalitions have already developed and used successfully Advocacy Factsheets at the UPR. For examples use the following links: [Moldova](#), [Mongolia](#), [Myanmar](#), [Thailand](#), [Uganda](#), and [Venezuela](#).

- Role of CSOs in the UPR process: <https://www.upr-info.org/en/how-to/role-ngos>
- The Pre-sessions: <https://www.upr-info.org/en/upr-process/pre-sessions>
- Reprisals guidelines for participants of the *UPR Info* Pre-sessions:
https://www.upr-info.org/sites/default/files/general-document/pdf/2017_01_24_guideline_on_reprisals_web_version.pdf
- Country Pages: <https://www.upr-info.org/en/review>
- Calendar of UPR Events: <https://www.upr-info.org/en/calendar>

Your Rights. Right Now.

- Plain English Guide to the Universal Periodic Review
http://www.rightsnow.ie/assets/5/EBAA5041-D2DE-8672-55C9086A7A967DA7_document/UPR_web.pdf

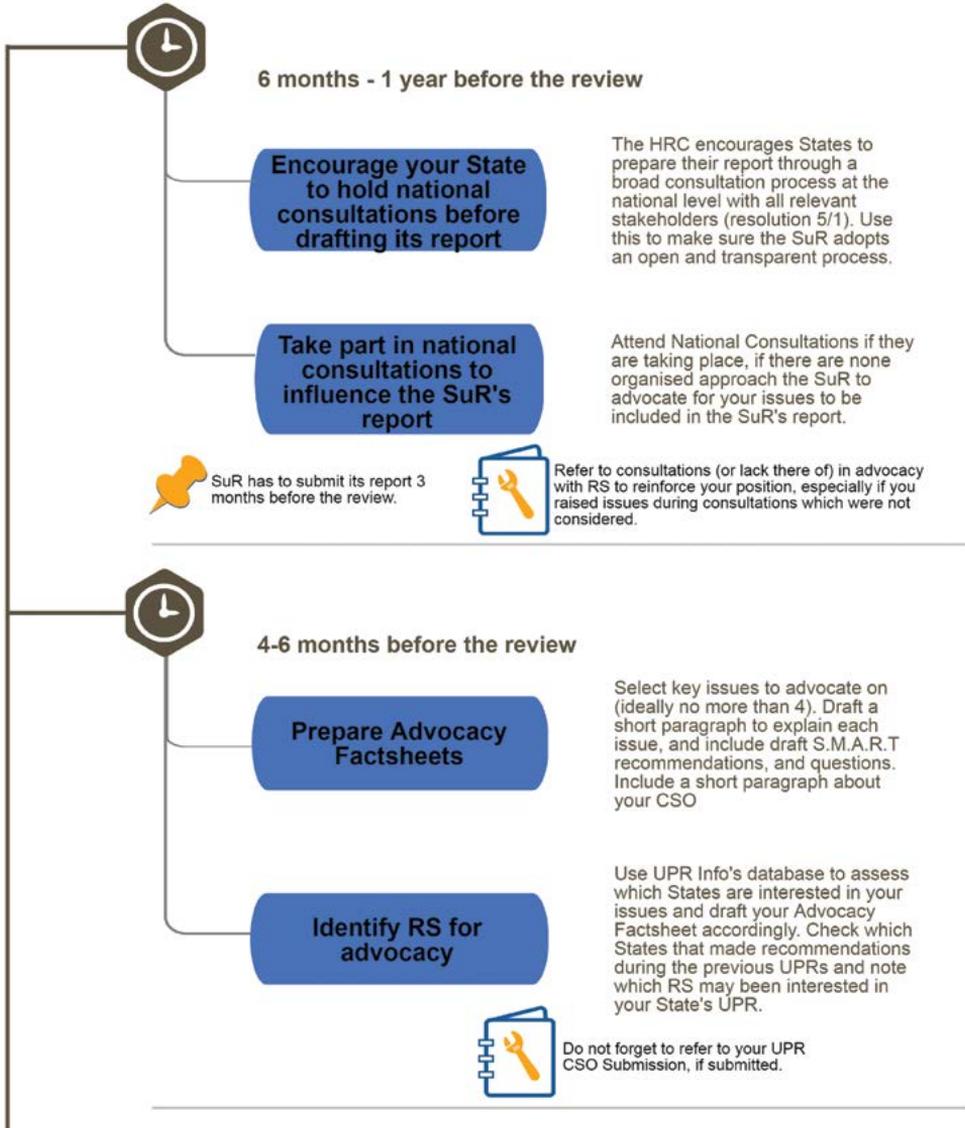
Nothern Ireland Human Rights Commission

- The Universal Periodic Review: A Guide for National Human Rights Institutions
<http://training.nihrc.org/upr>

For more publications related to the role of civil society at the UPR, visit:
<https://www.upr-info.org/en/how-to/documentation-for-ngos>

Timeline for CSO engagement in the UPR

When and how to maximise civil society impact at the UPR





3-4 months before the review

Contact embassies



Not all embassies have a person dedicated to the UPR nor do they all know about the UPR. If necessary ask for the person in charge of human rights. Be ready to explain what the UPR is during your meeting.



Organise a briefing for several (eg., all European embassies/all Latin American embassies) at once, or all embassies at the same time. It is more efficient and can help initiate discussions.

Identify and contact the person/team working on the UPR at the embassies in the SuR. Provide them with the Advocacy Factsheets and make follow-up calls.



1-2 months before the review

Consult the SuR National Report, the UN Agencies Compilation, and the CSO Submissions

Read the documents to check whether issues raised in your written submission have been included. If they have, add the references in your Advocacy Factsheets and mention it to the States you approach.

Contact Permanent Missions in Geneva

Contact the UPR or human rights team. Send your Advocacy Factsheets and make follow-up contact.

Participate in UPR Info's Pre-sessions

The public Pre-sessions are an opportunity to deliver a 5 to 10-minute statement including suggested questions and recommendations to the international community ahead of the UPR. More details are available at: www.upr-info.org/pre-sessions



Avoid contacting Mission staff during the HRC sessions. If such a session is held a month prior to the UPR, try to target State representatives a couple of weeks before and then the week after.



THE REVIEW

Attend the UPR in Geneva or follow proceedings via the webcast and UPR Info social media channels

<http://webtv.un.org/>
<https://twitter.com/UPRInfo>
<https://www.facebook.com/UPRInfo/>



Organise events around the UPR and invite key actors and partners, including the media.



2 days after the review

Read the Outcome Report on the OHCHR extranet (or UPR Info website)

If you were unable to follow the review, use this report to assess whether your issues were raised, whether they have resulted in recommendations, and whether they were "supported" or simply "noted". Report the outcome to colleagues and other partners.

Contact the States that incorporated your concerns

If a State incorporated your recommendations, contact them to thank them for their support.



0-3 months after the review/before the adoption of the Outcome Report at the HRC Session

Advocate to the SuR to accept recommendations and plan implementation

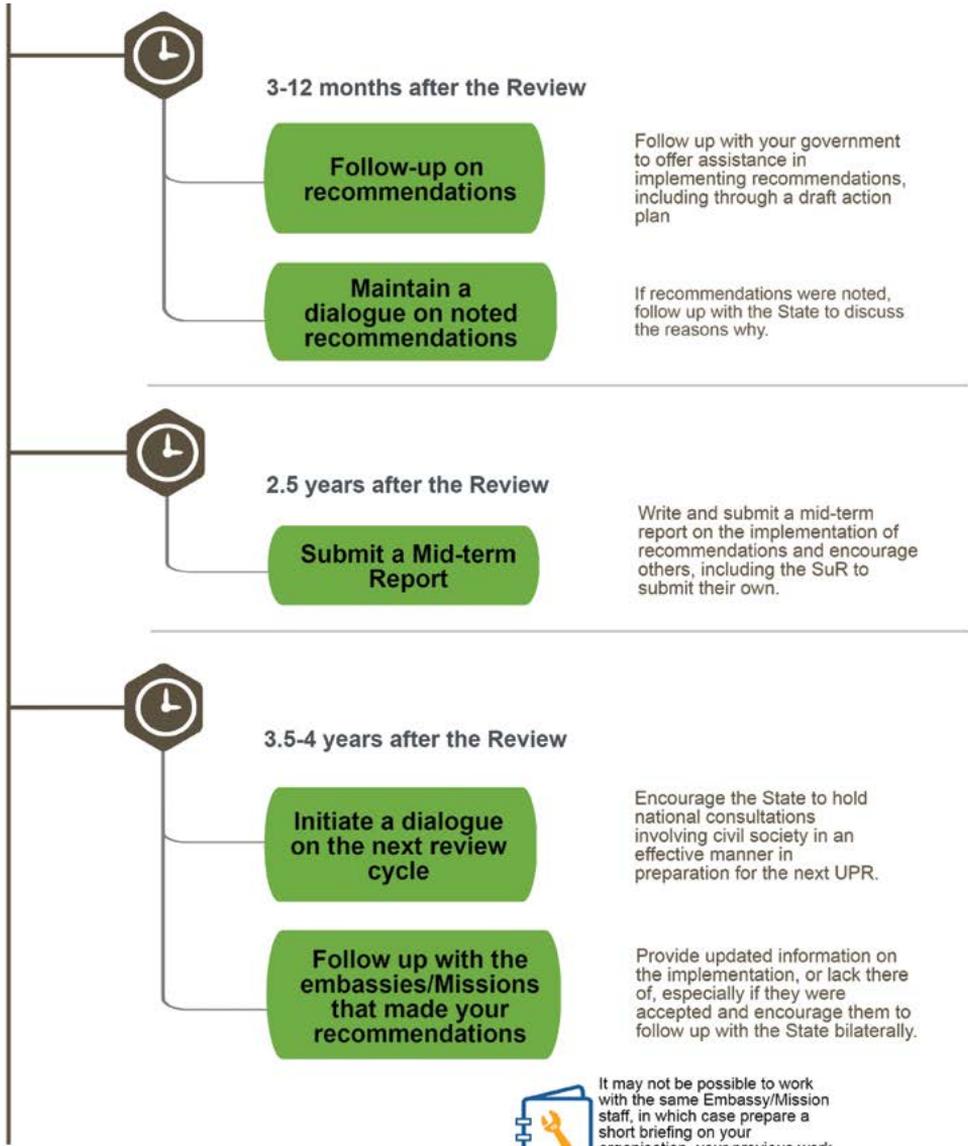
Request a meeting with SuR's representatives of the relevant ministries to discuss recommendations and advocate for them to be accepted when the UPR report is adopted.



Recommendations that "enjoy the support" of the SuR are considered accepted.



Do not forget to involve the national human rights institution of your country and supportive members of Parliament in your activities.



It may not be possible to work with the same Embassy/Mission staff, in which case prepare a short briefing on your organisation, your previous work with the RS, and your key areas of interest.



 info@upr-info.org

 + 41 22 321 77 70

 3, Rue de Varembe
4th Floor
1202 Geneva,
Switzerland

 UPRInfo

 @UPRInfo

 UPR Info

