



84th Extraordinary Outreach Session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child – Review

Apia, Samoa | 2-6 March 2020 Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT), Pacific Community

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Suva, Fiji, 2020

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Introduction

1. The 84th Extraordinary Outreach Session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child in Samoa ('CRC84') was the first time any of the United Nations Treaty Bodies have held a regional session to review multiple countries outside of Geneva or New York. The historic and innovative nature of this meeting mean it is prudent to document the experience and lessons learned, in order to inform future thinking around regional or sub-regional sessions.¹
2. The following review attempts to capture this through a consultative process and by drawing on a range of sources. It is authored by the Pacific Community Regional Rights Resource Team ('SPC RRRT').

History of calls for regional sessions

3. Advocacy for regional sessions has existed for decades² with proponents arguing that bringing the treaty body system closer to rights holders allows them to shape the very norms (and their application) which affect them. Article 12 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child holds that, "*States Parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child*". Regional sessions were seen as a potential way to effect its implementation by creating spaces for children to exercise their right to be heard in a more accessible way than sessions were only ever held in Geneva. Furthermore, it is suggested, that by making rights more relevant and the processes more participatory there would be greater understanding and ownership of implementation, increasing the overall effectiveness of the system.
4. As part of ongoing treaty body strengthening efforts the Geneva Academy established an academic platform to facilitate debate on the need for reform and ideas for what how that might look. At the conclusion of this project a report was compiled, collating the proposals which met their criteria for building a treaty body system that is fit for purpose. One of the four areas of substantive reform proposed is entitled 'enhancing accessibility', within which a key recommendation was to introduce a roving system that brings the treaty bodies closer to stakeholders.

"If some treaty body sessions were held in UN regional centres, it would enrich and strengthen the system as a whole, including its functions in Geneva, while making treaty bodies more visible and accessible to national stakeholders. The proposal to rove does not imply that Geneva will be abandoned as the treaty bodies' principal meeting place."³

5. Most recently this idea was endorsed by a position paper arising out of the annual Meeting of Chairpersons of the Human Rights Treaty Bodies:

¹ The 84th Session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child cannot be classified as a fully regional session as only states from the Pacific region were under review, and not the full Asia-Pacific region. There are a number of different approaches to regional sessions that could be considered in the future – most notably reviewing a selection of countries from either a full region, or sub-region, as was the case in Samoa. Whilst CRC84 was sub-regional in nature the lessons learned can inform all types of future regional sessions and throughout this document the phrase 'regional session' will be used to cover all possible approaches for ease of reference.

² See, for example, Heyns, C. H. (Christof H.) and Frans Viljoen. "The Impact of the United Nations Human Rights Treaties on the Domestic Level." Human Rights Quarterly, vol. 23 no. 3, 2001, p. 483-535, found at <https://muse.jhu.edu/article/13787>

³ 'Optimising the UN Treaty Body System', Geneva Academy, found at: <https://www.geneva-academy.ch/joomlatools-files/docman-files/Optimizing%20UN%20Treaty%20Bodies.pdf>.

“All treaty bodies agree that there are considerable benefits in conducting dialogues with States parties concerning their reports at a regional level, and that this should be offered to states on a pilot basis by those Committees wishing to do so, with a view to permanent implementation.”⁴

6. This is not to say that concept of regional sessions enjoys universal support and critics have raised concerns around neutrality of alternative venues, safety and security and cost.

The Treaty Body Review Process & objectives of CRC84

7. The ongoing intergovernmental treaty review process, established by GA Res. 66/254⁵ and continued by GA Res. 68/268⁶ requires the Secretary General to report to the General Assembly in 2020 on ‘the status of the human rights treaty body system and the progress achieved by the human rights treaty bodies in realizing greater efficiency and effectiveness in their work’.
8. CRC84 was therefore an opportunity to host a regional session and assess the impacts – positive and negative, to inform the future of the treaty body system through empirical evidence.

The decision-making process to hold a regional outreach session in Samoa and the role of SPC RRRT in CRC84

9. The Pacific Community (SPC) is a regional inter-governmental agency whose mission is “to work for the well-being of Pacific people through the effective and innovative application of science and knowledge, guided by a deep understanding of Pacific Island contexts and cultures.”⁷ Within SPC the Regional Rights Resource Team (RRRT) is its human rights division and whose objectives include ‘Pacific Island governments protecting and promoting human rights and fulfilling their international commitments’.
10. In July 2018 SPC RRRT commenced the Pacific Commonwealth Equality Project (PCEP), a 2 year £1.8m UK-funded initiative. Through this project, a significant amount of funding became available to leverage additional funding from other sources to hold CRC84 as a regional outreach session. Over the course of several months in 2019, SPC RRRT worked closely with Justice Clarence Vui Nelson of Samoa, member of the Committee on the Rights of the Child⁸, to advocate for the holding of CRC84 as a regional outreach session in Samoa.⁹ The necessary agreements to hold CRC84 as a regional outreach session in Samoa was secured in late 2019. Whilst CRC84 remained a United Nations session, SPC RRRT remained a key delivery partner throughout and the primary source of funding.
11. The Pacific was seen as a strategic choice by the Committee as the Pacific is a region with large potential for improved treaty body effectiveness where; (1) state reporting rates and civil society engagement levels are generally low;¹⁰ (2) treaty body engagement and implementation is impeded by geographical and resource constraints; (3) representation on the treaty bodies is

⁴ Meeting held from 24-28 June 2019 and position paper found at:

https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/HRBodies/HRBodies/TB/AnnualMeeting/31Meeting/ChairpersonsPositionPaper_July2019.docx.

⁵ <https://undocs.org/en/A/RES/66/254>.

⁶ <https://undocs.org/A/RES/68/268>.

⁷ <https://www.spc.int/about-us>.

⁸ Justice Clarence Vui Nelson is a justice of the Supreme Court of Samoa and the only Pacific Islander to sit on a United Nations human rights treaty body. He is also a member of the RRRT External Advisory Board.

⁹ In their advocacy efforts, RRRT and Justice Nelson held consultations with a range of parties, including the UK, Australian, New Zealand and Swedish governments (being its donors) as well as the members of the CRC, a number of OHCHR divisions in Geneva, the CRC secretariat, the Regional Office for the Pacific of OHCHR, the UN Resident Coordinator in Suva and UNICEF Pacific.

¹⁰ https://www.childrightsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/global_status_report_final.pdf

extremely low, further reducing the likelihood of effective engagement and implementation; (4) and the opportunity was afforded to the Committee due to the offer of support from SPC RRRT without which CRC84 would not have been possible.

12. Through consultation between the secretariat of the Committee, its Bureau and Committee as a whole, the OHCHR Human Rights Treaties and Council Mechanisms Division and RRRT it was determined that CRC84 would constitute an abridged one week session, reviewing three Pacific Island Countries (PICs) – Cook Islands, Federated States of Micronesia and Tuvalu – and adopting the list of issues for Kiribati. The other work undertaken by the Committee during regular three-week sessions would be omitted but in all other respects the working procedures remained consistent with a Geneva session. It was also agreed that SPC RRRT would manage a side events programme and two external outreach missions to Vanuatu and Fiji for individual Committee members following CRC84.

Review methodology

13. To ensure integrity of the findings and transparency of process the first draft of this review was circulated to the stakeholders on whose views and evidence it is based. Subsequent comments were considered in the final version. Evaluation data was collected throughout CRC84 using a survey, which was completed by 156 attendees over the course of the week, and one-on-one interviews with all Committee members and other stakeholders closely involved in the planning and delivery of the session.¹¹ This data, along with desk-based research, is used as the basis for all findings and quotes are used extensively throughout.
14. The review is intended to be both an account of what happened and an analysis of what went well and areas for improvement – both from a logistics and programmatic perspective. With regards to the latter the aim is to assess the impact of regional sessions on the effectiveness of the treaty body system. It is not intended to be an assessment of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and its working practices. It is limited to documenting the potential value of regional sessions as a potential complimentary form of meeting with the norm of being held in Geneva.
15. Given the review being conducted in the months immediately after CRC84 there is an obvious limitation in assessing long term impact on implementation. The nature of the programme for CRC84 and the venue meant that not all aspects of regional sessions would be tested. It is important to bear these factors in mind when considering the value of the lessons learned within the context of treaty body reform.
16. This review should also be read in the context of the global Covid-19 pandemic, which was in its early stages when CRC84 took place but had a significant immediate impact due to the travel restrictions that were already in place. These prevented two of the committee members from travelling to Samoa and multiple regional stakeholders, many of whom were children. The levels of participation would therefore have been greater had these restrictions not been in place. The pandemic also continues to have an impact on the ability to undertake follow-up activities to the session.

¹¹ A full list of interviews is found at Annex A.

Planning, programmes and logistics

Planning

17. The planning for CRC84 began in earnest in October 2019, allowing just over four months for all preparation to take place. Given the unique nature of the session more time would have been helpful, especially given this time spanned the Christmas period and the Committee had agreed to the Samoa session prior to October. However, some time was required to explain the nature of the session to donors before all requisite funding was finally confirmed and planning could begin in earnest. Further challenges arose from the number of parties required to be involved in the planning. The primary core group in planning was OHCHR Groups in Focus Section, Human Treaties Branch, Geneva; RRRT and the Resident Coordinator in Samoa,¹² supplemented by consultations with the Government of Samoa, OHCHR Regional Office for the Pacific (ROP), UNICEF and the UN Resident Coordinator's Office in Fiji. The CRC Bureau was consulted for decisions where necessary. Despite this number of parties an effective collaboration evolved, which delivered on all necessary preparation in the limited time available.
18. Defining features of the approach that worked well, which could be replicated for future initiatives include:
 1. The early establishment of a universal planning document, outlining all tasks, deadlines and focal points within respective agencies for each activity;
 2. Focal points copied in on all communications relating to tasks they have been assigned to;
 3. The designation of a primary planning task force, who meet regularly (online) to review progress and make decisions, which includes the host country provided it is not under review;¹³
 4. The designation of sub-task forces to plan aspects of delivery and who report back to the main planning task force, e.g. the communications strategy.
 5. A draft budget agreed early on, which is regularly reviewed, has the necessary finance committed from the outset and contains a contingency budget of approximately 10%.
 6. A scoping mission to the host country 2 months prior to the session to meet key stakeholders, make necessary on-the-ground preparations and check venue and other suppliers.

Programmes

19. Development of the draft formal programme of events was handled by the CRC secretariat, in consultation with the planning task force. This was then adopted by the CRC Bureau and can be found in full at Annex D. The regular format for opening Committee sessions was retained, as was the procedure for the state party dialogues (with a slight reduction in time from 6 hours to 5 hours in total per country¹⁴), adoption of list of issues and adoption of concluding observations. Additional meetings were also possible in the time available and these were dedicated solely to hearing from children and exploring one of the priority issues for the region and the Committee – climate change. Concept notes for these meetings were developed and approved by the Bureau. All state party dialogues, and a number of other formal meetings were open to the public, but

¹² The Resident Coordinator in Fiji was consulted early on but decided to defer to the RC Samoa as the host country

¹³ Initially meetings were held every 3-4 weeks for CRC84 and on demand as required. With just over a month to go these meetings became weekly. Despite the parties being on the opposite side of the world to each other these regular meetings were still feasible. One area for enhancement noted in relation to CRC84 was for earlier engagement with the host State.

¹⁴ Noting that the normal practice for Pacific Island Countries is conducting sessions by video and these are limited to 3 hours in duration

required pre-registration and accreditation, as in Geneva. These were also broadcast live on UN Web TV.

20. Mock sessions were offered by UNICEF to all states to undertake the constructive dialogue. The Cook Islands and Tuvalu were able to take advantage of this and undertook this exercise in the week prior to CRC84 in Fiji, en route to Samoa.
21. The planning task force agreed that it would be prudent to maximise the opportunity afforded by holding CRC84 in Samoa through a programme of side and parallel events. These aimed to maximise the participation and learning of children, state delegations, Committee members and other stakeholders. The main side events which could be attended by Committee members were held during the 2 hour lunch break each day. Concept notes were developed by interested organisers and these were reviewed by the CRC Bureau and five were accepted for the slots available. The five accepted topics were; (1) 'Pacific culture and faiths – a barrier or enabler of child rights? - SPC RRRT; (2) Dialogue on the right to health of children in the Samoan context - Samoa NHRI and Government of Samoa; (3) Early childhood development in emergencies - UNICEF, Government of Samoa; (4) A dive into the Blue Pacific - SPC RRRT and Pacific CSOs; (5) Children's right to protection from abuse and neglect - UNICEF, Government of Samoa.
22. Several measures were put in place to enable the meaningful participation of children. Firstly, the Committee made the unprecedented decision to dedicate three meetings of the session to holding thematic discussions with children on climate change, the 30th anniversary of the Convention and human rights issues that are important for them. Secondly, the Committee requested that all official side events of the session be moderated or co-moderated by a child. Many of the children who participated as speakers, moderators and co-moderators in these discussion and events were selected through a national school debate competition organized by the Samoan Ministry of Education Sports and Culture (MESCC), Ministry of Foreign Affairs and trade (MFAT) and UNRC in the week prior to CRC84. The topics of the debates, which involved 100+ children from ten schools in the Apia area, were the planned topics for the side events. Six outstanding students who participated in the school debate were selected to be the co-moderator of these side events. The children themselves selected the side events they wished to moderate based on their individual interests. Children were also mobilised by civil society and other actors to participate in the various side events and meetings. Finally, the children received a number of child-friendly materials and briefings to prepare them for their participation.
23. SPC RRRT managed all aspects of the side/parallel events, hiring a marquee to create a 'Talanoa¹⁵ Tent' in which all events would adopt this format, creating a contextually relevant environment, conducive for open dialogue. Parallel event concept note proposals were submitted to SPC RRRT by interested organisers and the Talanoa Tent and its facilities were made freely available for any events that addressed child rights or enhanced the capacity of state or non-state actors to protect/promote human rights. A full side and parallel events programme (including synopses) is found at Annex E. This was publicised in the national media and online prior to and during CRC84.
24. The week following CRC84 external missions were planned to Vanuatu and Fiji. Two Committee members were identified by the Committee and a programme developed by SPC RRRT with the aim of creating opportunities for exchange between the respective members, children, government representatives, civil society organisations and academics. The two-day programme

¹⁵ A Pacific term meaning a conversation in an open, inclusive and receptive space.

in each country culminated in each member delivering a public lecture at the national university. A full programme for the missions is found at Annex F.

25. The Government of Samoa, CRC84 donors and development partners hosted Committee members during a series of evening events, which also provided a forum for more informal networking. These events were agreed by the planning task force in consultation with the CRC Bureau and were held in the evenings of Tuesday – Friday during the week of CRC84. These were by invitation and hosted at a variety of locations by; (1) The Government of Samoa; (2) The UK Government; (3) SPC RRRT, the UN RC, Governments of Australia and New Zealand; (4) The Ministry of Justice of Samoa.

In-country logistics (CRC84 and external missions)

26. In Samoa, a core team of approximately fifteen people provided the required on the ground logistical support throughout the week. All agencies in the planning task force were represented within this team meaning that decisions could quickly be taken as the need arose. Coordination among the team (largely achieved through establishing a WhatsApp group for the week) was particularly effective and substantially contributed to the overall outcomes, responding to many emerging needs. A detailed list of the roles undertaken throughout the week can be found at Annex C. The Samoan Ministry of Education took primary responsibility for coordinating the participation of local children and OHCHR maintained its role with respect to the Committee, providing all necessary secretariat services throughout the week.
27. With staff in both Vanuatu and Fiji, SPC RRRT coordinated all planning and logistics for the external missions. For the latter, additional support was provided by the OHCHR Regional Office for the Pacific.

Outcomes

Empowerment of Pacific children

28. The Committee on the Rights of the Child has the ability to contribute to the realisation of Article 12 of the Convention¹⁶ through its working methods and this was highlighted in the empowerment of children as rights holders through their participation in CRC84. For children to be empowered they must first be given an understanding of their rights in order to be able to effectively advocate for them and meaningfully participate in decision making. Second they must be allowed the platform, networks and voice to make their views heard. Finally, Article 12 stipulates that simply listening to children is insufficient; their views must be seriously considered and given due consideration in law and in practice.
29. The outcomes of CRC84 in relation to the aforementioned are quite notable. Over the course of the week more than 300 children attended the various events including the session in Samoa and consultations in Fiji and Vanuatu. They starred in the national debates, and actively participated in and observed the formal sessions and side events, acting as the moderators in the latter. In

¹⁶General comment 12 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, found at: <https://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/docs/AdvanceVersions/CRC-C-GC-12.pdf> <http://docstore.ohchr.org/SelfServices/FilesHandler.ashx?enc=6QkG1d%2fPPRiCAqhKb7yhsqlkirKQZLK2M58RF%2f5F0vHKTUsoHNPBW0noZpSp5d6MSKiT09ePYFY4cH5tmyyvg%2fzVvi%2bJDuaCgf7NB%2bqHeFDlerQVMa5D11979EtHr%2bnA>

their moderator role they were joined by adult vice-moderators or adult panellists, to encourage inter-generational dialogue led by the children.

30. They also had considerable opportunity to engage with the Committee members in the margins. A sample of 56 children completed the evaluation survey and:
1. 98% reported increased knowledge of child rights as a result of attending CRC84;
 2. 91% said they learned something new about the Convention on the Rights of the Child or another human rights mechanism; and
 3. 84% made new contacts

“There has been more engagement, more child participation than I have ever seen in my time as a member of the CRC. This has been a significant advantage.”

Benyam Dawit Mezmur, Member of the Committee on the Rights of the Child

31. The qualitative feedback received from the children conveyed the true depth and meaning that their participation in CRC84 had brought. There was not a single negative comment relating to their involvement – rather hundreds of positive reflections revolving around a number of common themes.
32. 72% of under 18s surveyed said the best thing about CRC84 was that it gave them new information and ideas. The detailed responses showed this was particularly true in providing an understanding of the existence and nature of their rights as children under the convention. A recurrent reflection was also how the session had shown them these rights are actually valued by adults.

“There are so many rights of the child I learned from this meeting. Right to healthcare, freedom of thought, etc. We didn’t know that our rights are important to others but now we know that the Committee supports our rights”

“As a child I have found it to be very reassuring to see and know that the Committee members and everyone who has attended cares and values my rights as a child within the Pacific. Thank you.”

33. The knowledge children reported to have gained was not merely superficial, with many articulating how they had come to understand complex issues such as the relationship between their own culture and faith and human rights, corporal punishment, early childhood development and climate change. Further, they had come to better understand their role as actors within these issues – as rights holders and actors of change, including as child human rights defenders.

“I learned climate change, youths and human rights are all interrelated [and the] role of children in the fight against climate change”

“[It has] opened up doors and barriers for youth/children to protect and shine in the fight against climate change”

“I learn[ed] to speak up against violence, sexual abuse.”

34. The empowerment of children was also boosted by giving children a platform to discuss these sensitive issues among their peers in a safe space, potentially for some for the first time.

“This programme allowed students to share opinions and that has helped me understand that I am not the only one having problems but so do other students and this programme helped me try to think of ways to solve them.”

35. Respondents also explained how they had developed an appreciation for how the fulfilment of child rights is integral to national development.

“What I learned is there is a right for child in family, school and other Committee and they are a better future for the country”

“I learned that children’s rights also play an important role in developing our country”

36. For those children who are motivated to go on and take action to protect and promote human rights, or take a rights based approach to development, CRC84 opened up new networks and understanding of the agencies and potential partners working in these spaces.

“[I learned about] the strong support of overseas partnership in strengthening the ways of enhancing and protecting children’s rights”

37. A common concern in the Pacific is that children view the Convention as a charter to do as they please but the feedback following CRC84 showed many already understood that rights come with responsibilities and others developed an appreciation of this through their participation in the sessions. This is important as it starts to pave the way for increased implementation by allaying the concerns of adults who are in opposition to it.

“With every right comes a certain responsibility”

“My understanding before was just respect your parents no answer back. My understanding change -is that honour your parents but child have the right to give advice and freedom to speech to our parents of what we feel.”

“This meeting taught me that children’s rights do matter to adults. I used to think that adults saw children’s rights as a way for children to disrespect them.”

38. CRC84 also helped the children in attendance understand the value and purpose of Article 12 and how the duty bearer can often overlook this obligation and leave the right unrealised.

“I’ve learned to stand up for my rights as a child and don’t let the adults exclude us within their decision making”

“I would like to thank the Committee for their support and listening to us children. This is personally the first time and hopefully not the last time that anyone hears my opinions and thoughts.”

39. It was clear from the feedback that the impression left by CRC84 would not be limited to the children who were able to attend and that there would be significant added value through lessons learned being shared among peers. One child reported that only a few students could come from her school, so she is planning to do a presentation for everyone in the coming days. And another talked of how they are in a school environmental campaign group and that the information she learned from CRC84 would be shared with them and build their overall capacity.

40. The significant end result of the above is that CRC84 has significantly contributed to the development of a large and ever increasing group of children, particularly in Samoa, who are now more aware of their rights and responsibilities, more able to advocate for them and protect them, more empowered and inclined to advocate for the rights of others and more likely to protect the rights of the child as they grow up, thanks to their understanding of the broader national development context and of their own role in promoting and protecting human rights.

“I have learnt that children had to be prepared for responsible and active citizenship and have the right to speak up where necessary”

“My recommendations to government, villages, community and especially adults let us children of Samoa to be heard – it’s important because children are the future leaders of tomorrow”

“We were very happy to hold an official meeting with children. It shows that they are important. Maybe we can continue to do this. It empowered the children and they seemed more confident.”

Amal Aldoseri, Member of the Committee on the Rights of the Child

41. Finally, one of the greatest barriers to implementation of child rights, particularly in the Pacific, can be harmful adult attitudes and practices. CRC84 proved to be an effective platform for addressing some of these and further strengthening the foundations for wider enjoyment of the rights contained within the convention. This was achieved by opening up the treaty body process to wide public participation and enabling people far outside of Geneva to attend formal sessions and side events discussing sensitive child rights issues relevant to the region.

“Instead of applying corporal punishment to my children I’ll talk to them”

“[I learned to] change my approach to addressing violence and abuse against children and women”

Enriched dialogue

42. The treaty body reporting process should encompass a dialogue between the people at the heart of the relevant convention, the state, civil society and the independent experts. Constructive dialogue requires: (i) the meaningful participation of all relevant stakeholders; and (ii) a conducive environment that does not generate unequal power dynamics. This can be difficult to achieve in unfamiliar formal surroundings, in front of global experts and with only a small delegation, as is often the case in Geneva. CRC84 demonstrated the value of regional sessions in addressing both concerns.
43. The regional session allowed for widespread participation and greater parity of parties, which in turn led to open and rich dialogue. Furthermore, opportunities for dialogue were abundant outside of the formal sessions. For the Committee this involved the daily side events, the ability to meet in the margins (arising from a dedicated venue for accommodation and all CRC84 events), evening events and the external missions to Vanuatu and Fiji.

“Sometimes in Geneva there is a closed meeting of some CRC expert member with NGOs. A few members come. Here most of the CRC members were coming to all the side events. And we were able to ask questions and the people at the side events were able to speak with us. Never have I seen so much free dialogue. The side events were extraordinary. We have never had such important exchanges during a session in Geneva.”

Luis Ernesto Pedernera Reyna, Chairperson of the Committee on the Rights of the Child

44. **(i) Widespread participation.** Across Samoa, Fiji and Vanuatu over 1000 people enjoyed direct engagement with the Committee, including children, representatives of civil society, governments and national human rights institutions, law enforcement agencies, academics and the judiciary. Civil society from at least eleven Pacific Island Countries attended and spoke with the Committee and one another. The widespread participation of key stakeholders in CRC84 substantively contributed to the dialogues and outcomes. This was possible through CRC84 being more accessible to all stakeholders including rights holders and duty bearers, in a geographical sense as well as physically and culturally.

“[There was a] massive amount of participation by people from the region and in particular by children... which would not have happened if the session was in Geneva or by video conference.”

Orest Nowosad, Chief, Groups in Focus Section, Human Rights Treaties Branch, OHCHR

45. There are several ways in which the regional nature of the 84th session made this possible through being more accessible. Most obviously this was thanks to the geographical proximity of the session to the stakeholders. Travelling from the Pacific to Geneva can take up to two days and be extremely costly. By holding a regional session at least 50 civil society representatives¹⁷ from eleven Pacific Island Countries were able to attend. This enabled the Committee to hear from them during one of the lunchtime side events on the spectrum of child rights issues across the region, understand common challenges and best practices and where differences exist. In addition to civil society, government representatives from three states not under review were able to attend¹⁸ as well as many development partners, notably from SPC RRRT, UNICEF, OHCHR UNDP and the Asian Development Bank. The scale of the gathering allowed for a blending of the side events and formal sessions and for the different agencies to work together and network in a manner complimentary to the aims of the treaty body Committee.

“Holding the session in the region allowed CRC members to speak with all actors. Here it was possible to meet with local NGOs, more people from UNICEF and other agencies that normally would not meet in Geneva or if a video conference.”

Chanmi Kim, OHCHR

46. The adoption of the list of issues for Kiribati also demonstrated the potential value of regional sessions in relation to this function of the Committee. Prior to the Committee’s constructive dialogue with a State party, the Committee meets with relevant non-State stakeholders and adopts lists of issues for the State. For countries in the Pacific, lists of issues are usually adopted without the participation of local civil society and with very few UN representatives. In contrast,

¹⁷ <https://www.childrightsconnect.org/samoa/>.

¹⁸ Samoa, Fiji and Nauru.

the pre-sessional working group meeting for Kiribati benefited from the participation of i-Kiribati civil society and UN agencies and offices based in the region.

“The discussion with Kiribati at the pre-session was much better than they normally are for the Pacific by video conference.”

Orest Nowosad, Chief, Groups in Focus Section, Human Rights Treaties Branch, OHCHR

47. Accessibility of the session was also enhanced by having a sign language interpreter for all formal meetings of the Session for the very first time for the CRC, streaming proceedings live on Facebook (later archived on UN WebTV) and arranging the venue and programme so that it maximised opportunities for an active engagement – all of which contributed to richer dialogues and learning.

“[I] commend the structure of the week that includes space for interaction, during the breaks, lunch sessions, presentations. Using every minute. It has greatly enriched the understanding of the subject matter, of all work of the members and how they will approach the work in the future.”

Bragi Guðbrandsson Committee on the Rights of the Child

48. Participation was further widened through the external visits to Vanuatu and Fiji that were conducted the week immediately after CRC84 by two of the Committee members. Engagement with state and non-state actors including education institutions to raise the awareness of CRC was carried out over the two days in both countries. Among other outcomes this brought attention to alternative reporting and CSOs were mobilised as a result to submit alternative reports and contributed to Committee members’ knowledge of some country-specific issues.
49. **(ii) Conducive environment.** A more abstract but no less important element of accessibility to the dialogue was that of parity of parties. Whereas in Geneva the surroundings can be perceived as unfamiliar and even intimidating, it was possible to adopt a more Pacific approach to CRC84. Simple gestures such as having a room setup where the delegation could face all of the members, who were wearing local attire, put people at ease. As did side events being run in a talanoa format. And whilst the states under review were still from overseas, the people and surroundings were familiar. The Committee were guests of the Pacific and this created conditions for a better balance of power and more constructive dialogue. This was particularly important to facilitate the meaningful participation of children.

“[I did] feel very much at home [and] not scared. This is a familiar setting... because it is our home. We are very proud that the Committee chose to come to Samoa.”

Child side event moderator

“[It] felt more comfortable being able to see everyone face to face. Normal arrangement in Geneva leaves some CRC members facing the backs of state delegates. The rules of engagement during the regional session have been much more informal. [I] hope this will continue in Geneva. “

Philip Jaffe, Committee on the Rights of the Child

50. The increased direct engagement led to Committee members being able to give more recognition to the delegates, which in turn led to a more supportive relationship being established. It was observed that Committee members were posing very contextualised questions and trying to dig into issues while being sensitive to the Pacific culture. This led to a feeling that proceedings were

less intimidating and more understanding through the line of questioning and at times the Committee were exceptionally empathetic.

“There was even an emotional moment when a government delegate started to cry when she was responding during the dialogue and a CRC member came over to reassure her. [It was a] very human moment.”

Child Rights Connect

Enhanced capacity and impact of the Committee

51. The dialogue was also improved by an increase in the capacity of the Committee, which will also likely positively impact future sessions beyond Samoa. This was achieved in a number of ways; (i) knowledge gained that would not have been possible in Geneva; (ii) the opportunity to educate to a wide audience (iii) increased Committee motivation and cohesion; and (iv) greater efficiency.
52. **(i) New knowledge.** It was clear from the reactions of the members that the insight they gained through the regional nature of CRC84 was profound. One of the longest serving members declared it the ‘most amazing session to date’ and this was widely acknowledged to be thanks to the views and experiences brought to the fore by the children. Throughout the week, children took centre stage in the formal Committee meetings, the side events, in the margins and the missions to Fiji and Vanuatu following CRC84.
53. Children shared their views on a range of child rights issues with the Committee. Among them was prevailing gender stereotypes and patriarchal attitudes that lead to discrimination against girls. Children also shared their personal experiences, including what it was like as a 14-year-old girl going through puberty being told “to dress modestly to avoid being sexually assaulted”. In these discussions, children explored how they see culture as both a barrier and an enabler of their rights. They were also frank in sharing how corporal punishment was often a regular feature in their lives. They gave thoughtful and considerate insights into discussions on child rights issues that affect their lives and suggested practical solutions relevant to their context.

“It is nothing like reading a report. It is possible to feel and understand so much more when the people speak. It has provided a much deeper understanding.”

Amal Aldoseri, Member of the Committee on the Rights of the Child

54. These changes were also observed by development partners who work regularly with the Committee, and among the children themselves.

“[There is a] big change of the CRC members. They clearly have a greater appreciation of the situations and cultures of the countries where the reporting states are from. This is evident by the comprehensive dialogue that is in context.”

Talei Cama, UNICEF

“[I] thought that at the beginning CRC members did not know what kids are going through here. [I] think the CRC members [now] have a better understanding.”

Child side event moderator

55. **(ii) Opportunity to educate.** For each of the country reviews the State delegations who were not under consideration during that particular session were often in the audience, alongside CSOs, NHRI staff and other stakeholders.

56. This diverse stakeholder participation presented the Committee an opportunity to make their interventions educational and informative.

“Several of us saw that opportunity so perhaps we were playing a little to the audience. When the Cook Islands were up, I knew then that the delegates from Tuvalu were there listening. I did think it was a good learning experience for all three countries. So, yes, I do think we took a few more opportunities for speaking more didactically - sharing a few gems to take away.”

Ann Skelton, Committee on the Rights of the Child

57. It was observed that this gave the Cook Islands a particularly strong insight as they were reviewed last and therefore able to benefit from observing two other reviews first. Whilst the primary audience for these interventions were the other state delegations, they also had an educational impact on the wider audience, which each day consisted of children, civil society organisations from across the Pacific, NHRIs and development partners. The fact that 89% of the 156 survey respondents reported increased knowledge in child rights as a result of attending CRC84 suggests the tactic adopted by the members in this regard was particularly effective.

58. **(iii) Enhanced team spirit and engagement.** CRC84 was the first time that the Committee met with such a large group of children during a formal session, or with such a diverse set of stakeholders from the region. The knowledge and experiences the children were able to impart, as documented in the aforementioned sections were invigorating and inspiring to the Committee. The local media spotlight and widespread stakeholder participation further inspired Committee members to go to great lengths to be well informed of the national contexts. Some Committee members reported that this enhanced their motivation as a result of having extensive and meaningful engagement with children from the region which is very limited in Geneva. In addition to the Committee’s motivations levels being raised, the internal cohesion of the group also improved as a result of the time spent together and being afforded the opportunity to better appreciate local context and views.

“The Committee worked differently here. Being away, encapsulated. Has affected the group dynamic of the Committee for the better. Hopes that this better closeness in the way of working will continue.”

Member of the Committee on the Rights of the Child

“I have perceived here in the session here in Samoa that the colleagues have had a different attitude, very open to listen. There is also a good spirit due perhaps to the fact we have been together working so closely for a week. Working together has reinforced our sense of belonging and of our group. That also helps a lot with our work.”

Luis Ernesto Pedernera Reyna, Chairperson of the Committee on the Rights of the Child

59. **(iv) Greater efficiency.** The opportunity to work through an intense period permitted the Committee to meet regularly, discuss and engage as a team enhancing their team spirit. The intensity contributed to Members the opportunity to focus their deliberation with a shorter dialogue time than in Geneva. Members spent a considerable amount of time together during the week in both formal and informal settings, seemingly having the effect of a team-building exercise. Spending most of the week together, the group dynamic was enhanced as members also saw each

other regularly including socially breaking down sometimes barriers that might be in a more formal context as in Geneva.

“The unity of the Committee members spending so much time together made the session more focussed and efficient.”

Benyam Mezmur, Committee on the Rights of the Child

60. Throughout the week the members were immersed in child rights issues solely related to the Pacific – the states under review were all Pacific, adopting the list of issues was for a Pacific state, the host country and general public provided further Pacific insights and the side events all looked at child rights issues in the region. Further efficiency in Committee proceedings was therefore derived from this regional nature of the session. It led to a continuity in the work of the Committee thanks to focusing on one region with many common challenges and implementation opportunities. Mindful of the fact that each country faces its own unique challenges the Committee was then also able to assign particular members responsibility for each country and ensure the dialogue accurately addressed these differences, recognising common concerns but also recognising the diversity in the region.

“It has been a great benefit to have several countries from the same region reviewed in one session. Possible to compare countries because they are in the same region with similar contexts.”

Philip Jaffe, Committee on the Rights of the Child

Contextualised concluding observations

61. An analysis of the concluding observations (COBs) for the states under review from CRC84 compared to their previous review by the same Committee shows a marginal increase in the number of recommendations that are couched in the local and cultural context¹⁹ from 15 in total up to 20. This is not consistent across the three states under review however, with Tuvalu receiving the same number across both reviews.
62. What may be more significant than the absolute number of culturally contextualised COBs is to compare the content of these same references. As recommended at the 23rd meeting of the Treaty Body Chairpersons, concluding observations should be ‘specific and targeted’.²⁰ Comparison of the *content* of the Concluding Observations issued at the 84th Extraordinary session, with those identified in the prior Concluding Observations shows that there is more specificity in the references in the COBs of the session held in the region.²¹
63. The members themselves conveyed a strong sense that their ability to make the COBs more relevant and contextualised had significantly increased thanks to the nature of the regional session and the various benefits that conferred, as detailed earlier. Their participation in the session in Samoa allowed the members to take into account the local reality, hear and learn directly from local communities and in particular children, and have a stronger sense of the challenges faced by the States under review through the constructive dialogues in a less formal setting and the various side events and opportunities to engage informally with delegations, children and other stakeholders

¹⁹ Observations where the topic or recommendation is specific to the national or regional cultural context.

²⁰ (A/66/175, annex II, para. 29).

²¹ For a comparative table of COBs for each state under review see Annex G.

64. One member observed that the effect of holding the session in the region, with greater contact of the Committee members with children and other stakeholders in the region, was that the Committee was able to better capture some contemporary, emergent and urgent issues. This was further strengthened by the composition of state delegations including senior government representatives who may not have been able to travel to Geneva. For example, in the case of Cook Islands there were issues about the ongoing revision of the criminal code, i.e. inconsistencies with the CRC jurisprudence and General Comment 24, and thanks to a member of the delegation also being in the national body working on that review, this discussion was rich and ended up with tailored recommendations relating to child justice. Another example was the detailed discussion with Cook Islands delegates on the right to health (flying doctors programme), and their social programs including for children with disabilities, which were welcomed by the Committee after being discussed in depth, and put in the concluding observations as good practice in addressing country specific and geographical challenges.
65. Furthermore, there were new country-region related issues which were better understood in the dialogue and reflected in the concluding observations, including international migration of children in the context of climate change, more detailed recommendations related to children affected by climate change and decriminalization of same sex relations. A further new aspect is that a number of recommendations involved religious leaders, after the Committee realised their importance in driving implementation.

“The regional session has made the Committee more sensitive to the cultural context. It has been very useful [and] resulted in the Committee members having greater knowledge and understanding of the cultural context. This has led us to want to make the concluding observations more practical and realistic.”

Velina Todorova, Committee on the Rights of the Child

66. In addition to how the Committee was able to make its COBs more relevant through tailoring the content, it was also able to achieve this objective through being careful of what **not** to include. Thanks to its better understanding of the region, countries’ resources and small populations, the Committee decided not to add or to adapt some issues in the COBs. For example, the Committee did not ask States to collect disaggregated data on child victims of violence/abuse as it could lead to them being easily identified and pose privacy safety and other risks in island nations with small populations. Regarding child justice, instead of asking States to establish child justice systems, which could be too onerous for a small island, it recommended systematic training of judges and other professionals on the provision of the Convention (Tuvalu)²² or for the designation of specialised judges for children (FSM).
67. The overall sense of the Committee was that through the regional session modality Members had been empowered to better tailor their recommendations and that this immediately led to improved understanding among the state delegations of how they could and should be implemented.

²² Examples provided by members of the Committee during interviews with SPC RRRRT

“We had the feeling that the delegates developed a better understanding of our recommendations – We had a better understanding and are better able to help them when they take recommendations back to government. That is what should be done to promote and protect the rights of children.”

Gehad Madi, Committee on the Rights of the Child

Increased profile and awareness of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and other human rights mechanisms

68. The profile and general awareness of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and other human rights mechanisms were significantly increased as a result of CRC84, particularly regionally but also globally. The session led to the following results: (i) higher level and more diverse state delegations and political representation; (ii) increased Pacific awareness of child rights and the work of the Committee; (iii) growing awareness of other human rights mechanisms; and (iv) increased interest in the treaty body nomination process.
69. **(i) Higher level representation.** Samoa as the host Government, the participating Government delegations, children from Samoa and the Pacific, and other national and regional stakeholders were undeniably proud that the Committee on the Rights of the Child chose it as the host of the first ever regional session of any of the United Nations treaty bodies. The prestige this bestowed upon proceedings had a direct impact on the level of representation among state delegations, and other government representatives and stakeholders who were present.
70. Samoa set the bar in this regard with CRC84 being officially opened by the Prime Minister, who attended on two separate occasions. Samoa was also represented throughout the week by the Deputy Prime Minister, several ministerial Chief Executive Officers,²³ members of the judiciary and the Ombudsman / Head of the National Human Rights Institution. The states under review also brought higher level and more diverse delegations than would usually have participated in a video conference or travelled to Geneva. This had the benefit of leading to a more informed dialogue and will likely also foster broader political will for implementation.

“Having the session in the region has resulted in higher level state delegations and also more multi-sectoral members of delegations.”

Benyam Mezmur, Committee on the Rights of the Child

“What we heard from the Cook Islands was that they were taking it super seriously. They seemed impressed that it was happening here, and they were quite delighted to be here. They caught the momentousness of the occasion. And they brought a very senior delegation.”

Ann Skelton, Committee on the Rights of the Child

71. **(ii) Increased awareness of child rights and the work of the Committee.** The profile of the Committee, its work and general awareness of child rights was increased in two ways as a result of CRC84. First, through the direct participation of children, civil society organisations and other stakeholders. Second, through the extensive national and regional media coverage the event was afforded. This is of particular value to the Pacific where levels of awareness of human rights and the work of treaty bodies is generally quite low.

²³ Equivalent to Permanent/Principal Secretaries.

“[There is a] need to make children and general public more aware of the United Nations. The UN and the CRC and other parts of the UN are perceived as not relevant to the Pacific. Huge need for public awareness measures to be taken.”

Justice Vui Nelson, Committee on the Rights of the Child

72. As stated above, there were multiple learning opportunities arising from CRC84. These started with the national school debate competition and carried through CRC84 with the formal sessions, side and parallel events, evening functions and external missions to Vanuatu and Fiji, as well as the informal opportunities that arose organically. With well over 1000 people participating in these events the potential impact of these opportunities was significant and the quantitative data indicates this potential was realised. 89% of survey respondents reported increased knowledge of child rights and 86% said they learned something new about how the Convention on the Rights of the Child or another human rights procedure works.
73. At a state and regional level CRC84 was a valuable learning opportunity, which was reflected by the delegations sent by the Governments of Fiji and Nauru and the Pacific Islands Forum Secretariat. The Government of Fiji reported that they had seen CRC84 as an opportunity to develop their capacity for engaging with the Committee by experiencing it first-hand. None of these delegations would have attended had the session been held in Geneva.
74. The educational nature of CRC84 extended well beyond Taumeasina Island Resort, however, thanks to the level of media coverage given to proceedings and the issues being discussed. Journalists attended throughout the week and there were several articles in the Samoan national newspapers each day. National media in other Pacific Island Countries (including states not under review) and international media also ran articles on CRC84. Three primetime talkback TV shows in Samoa ran prior to and during the week of CRC84 featuring a number of key stakeholders including SPC RRRT, the Ministry of Women Community and Social Development and international development partners. Proceedings were reported widely online with prominent regional news outlets such as Radio New Zealand running several stories and all sessions broadcast live on the United Nations Facebook pages and later on, UNTV. Through social media SPC RRRT alone tracked 70,000 views and nearly 6,000 comments, retweets and likes. The potential audience of the combined communications outputs is estimated to be up to 4.7 million people.

“There is a lot in the media across the region. And the state delegates are sharing the experience with the governments in their capitals.”

Talei Cama, UNICEF

75. **(iii) Other human rights mechanisms.** CRC84 brought further engagement and learning around the other human rights mechanisms and new thinking in effective implementation strategies. This happened primarily in the talanoa tent during the parallel events designed for Pacific civil society organisations and the states not under review at any particular time. Feedback from these events showed they were very well received, particularly the ones which explored the Universal Periodic Review and the value of National Mechanisms for Implementation, Reporting and Follow-Up. One of the outcomes in this regard was that CSO’s reported being able to better understand the context of CRC84 and the ongoing process, rather than seeing it as a one-off event. This then opened the door to future engagement and follow-up in the process.

“Side events were critical to establishing new connections and learning more about engagement opportunities with UN Mechanisms. Pacific CSOs were able to gain insight into the process and identify entry points for their own advocacy work.”

Nuanua O Le Alofa representative (Samoa Disability Advocacy Organisation)

76. **(iv) Treaty body nomination process.** There have been hundreds of experts sitting on the various treaty body Committees over the years yet only one from any of the Pacific Island Countries – Justice Vui Clarence Nelson, who currently serves on the Committee on the Rights of the Child and who was instrumental in bringing CRC84 to Samoa.

“Pleased and proud that Nelson is a member of CRC. Would be good to have a woman from the Pacific be a TB member.”

FSM State Delegate

77. Over the course of the week Justice Vui’s role was prominent – for many people, the children in particular, it was the first time they had learned about these committees and their importance.

“Didn’t know about how nomination worked or that Samoa had a member of a UN body. Think it is good to know that people from Samoa could grow up to be in the UN.”

Child Side Event Moderator

78. There was also a widespread realisation of the lack of a Pacific voice within these bodies and the need for this to be rectified. The Cook Islands delegation reported not being aware that they were eligible to nominate experts to the treaty bodies and the Tuvaluan delegation also took time to reflect on whether they should be putting people forward in the future.

“Learned about the nomination process. Would have to be tabled in Cabinet. Being a member would give first-hand experience of how treaty bodies work.”

Tuvalu State Delegate

79. The level of political participation and increased profile of the work of the Committee that was achieved through CRC84 is of vital importance as it directly correlates to the drivers of implementation – national awareness, understanding and ownership and political will. All four factors, described above, which contributed to this increase in profile and awareness will therefore also likely enhance implementation immediately and in the longer term.

“It has been important for this region to know what we do. This has an important value in terms of education and promotion of human rights across the region. By coming to the Pacific, [I] feel that the CRC has been made more relatable”

Luis Ernesto Pedernera Reyna, Chairperson of the Committee on the Rights of the Child

Commitments and partnerships developed in the margins

80. The COBs were not the only tangible outcomes of CRC84. The presence of state delegations, other state representatives, civil society organisations, NHRIs, the judiciary and development partners gave rise to bilateral and multi-lateral discussions and agreements throughout the week. Strategic planning sessions were held between development partners and civil society organisations, offers

of technical assistance for implementation of concluding observations were made and taken back to capital and discussions were held on creating a national coalition of NGOs. What was apparent was that these conversations were happening throughout the week. Every available space outside of the formal meeting room was usually taken as these discussions took place and collaborations sprang up. The full extent of what these achieved will likely be impossible to calculate but it is, needless to say, considerable, and an added value of regional sessions worth noting.

“Together with RRRT, we will support CSOs to follow-up on the national implementation of the Concluding Observations of the CRC in relevant countries, and to engage in other steps of the reporting cycle of the Committee. Without the session, we would not have been able to establish such a strong partnership.”

Child Rights Connect representative

“NOLA staff and members were also able to connect with colleagues from other countries to discuss how they could collaborate going forward.”

Nuanua O Le Alofa representative (Samoa Disability Advocacy Organisation)

“[I have] plans to take many ideas from the meetings to [my] media work and NGO.”

Samoa civil society representative

Environmental impact

81. In considering the environmental impact we can make two telling calculations. The first is the combined air distance travelled for a Geneva sitting compared to CRC84 taking into account only the Committee members, the secretariat and the state delegations. The second is to compare a Geneva sitting against CRC84 taking into account the wider audience.
82. For the first calculation the total distance travelled covers 13 Committee members from their home stations, 4 OHCHR staff from Geneva, and the state delegations from Cook Islands, FSM and Tuvalu. The total distance travelled by air for CRC84 in Samoa was 585,151 kilometres. If the session were held in Geneva this have been 807,192 kilometres, almost 40% more.²⁴
83. This is a considerable difference in its own right, but if we take into account all stakeholders present then the savings in air miles are astronomical. To make this calculation some crude assumptions must be drawn but a conservative estimate would add a further 800 participants travelling from the Pacific to Geneva if it were to have the same stakeholder engagement as CRC84. Given most participants were from Samoa if we take that as the starting point for these hypothetical travellers then at least an additional **26 million** air kilometres were saved by holding the session regionally.

Costs

84. Information received from the CRC secretariat shows that the costs of the Committee members’ Daily Subsistence Allowance (DSA) and travel for a regular session in Geneva is in the region of USD \$78,515.²⁵ This amount is based on 13 members attending, as did at CRC84. DSA and travel for the Committee members and four secretariat staff members to attend CRC84 amounted to

²⁴ See Annex H for calculation methodology and breakdown.

²⁵ See Annex I for a breakdown of all cost calculations for a Geneva sitting and CRC84

\$176,710. Taking into account the fact that Samoa would be one of the more expensive destinations in the world, given its remoteness and distance from major travel hubs, there is no strong evidence to indicate that cost should be a potential barrier for other future regional sessions to compliment those in Geneva.

85. Direct comparison between a regular Geneva session and CRC 84 for other costs is not possible due to the hidden/associated nature of some costs of the former. For example, the United Nations provides its offices, conference facilities and more when a session is held in Geneva. In Samoa, these costs were part of the venue hire and accommodation, which amounted to \$37,878.
86. The costs for interpretation and technical services in Geneva were unable as part of this review. Costs for CRC84 for the interpreters, a technician and equipment amounted to \$60,000. Furthermore, the costs for the side and parallel events were \$8,700 while the costs of the outreach missions to Vanuatu and Fiji came to \$8,000.
87. Due to direct comparison of costs only being possible for flights and DSA, caution is therefore urged when drawing conclusions on the overall amount required for CRC84. This matter is given further consideration in the concluding paragraphs below.
88. The Government of Samoa made a generous offer to contribute to these costs but it was decided by the development partners to not place this financial burden on the host, particularly in light of the measles epidemic that the country was emerging from at the time. Instead they provided transportation and airport courtesies for Committee members and Secretariat, security, hosted welcome event and other activities that contributed to the team-spirit and wider engagement with Pacific and Samoan people. The budget for CRC84 was therefore provided by SPC RRRT donors,²⁶ the UN Resident Coordinators Office of Samoa and UNICEF Pacific. Of the costs above around 15% were covered by the two UN offices and 85% by SPC RRRT donors.
89. Participation costs of children, civil society organisations and development partners are not included in the above figures. A rough calculation of these comes to an estimation of \$85,000 and includes the travel, accommodation, daily subsistence allowances, meals and refreshments of the 100+ children who participated each day, 500 persons in the public audience, 8 CSOs from 8 different Pacific Island Countries and the team of 10 SPC RRRT staff who provided support through the week.

Areas for improvement

90. **(i) Post-CRC84 planning for children.** The extensive and meaningful participation of children was the highlight of CRC84. However, the full extent of their participation was only arranged relatively close to the event itself. This meant that there was no opportunity to consider the follow-up to their involvement. Thus, the engagement of the host government early is important in this regard.
91. The participation of children gave rise to an expectation that the issues raised would then be taken forward. It is not too late to address this gap. Two possible ways in which this may be achieved would be; (1) to develop a report of their issues raised, hold a consultation with the children to talk about how they might take forward their own activities on child rights in Samoa and to ensure the report accurately reflects their dialogue, and submit it to the Committee for their consideration during Samoa's next review; and (2) host a meeting with the child participants to

²⁶ The UK government through the Pacific Commonwealth Equality Project, as well as the Australian, New Zealand and Swedish governments.

provide an overview of this review and highlight their role in the historic meeting and what it might mean for the future of the treaty body system.

92. For any future sessions of this nature it would be prudent to develop a comprehensive follow-up plan prior, with children leading the process from concept development through to follow-up.
93. Furthermore, some of the issues raised were extremely serious in nature – including sexual violence and domestic abuse. It was evident there was not widespread understanding among the children and adults present about what victims should do, where they should go.

“It would it have been useful if advice had been a little bit more precise. Like, at your school there should be someone that you can speak to. Or here is a letter that you could send to the Ombudsman. Or, you know, something a bit more useful for children than these kind of broad, brush stroke ideas.

Those are all things, I think it’s perfectly understandable, that were not all foreseen. It would be very hard to foresee everything but there are lessons that come out of these things. By coming here you raise expectations; by opening things that are secret you create risk. It might be necessary to do it, but we won’t be here for the fall out. Who will be here?”

Ann Skelton, Committee on the Rights of the Child

94. This situation would have been well addressed if consideration had been given to all likely issues that would be raised and an exit briefing prepared for all participants (provided in written form and delivered orally at a concluding session) providing practical, accessible, timely, age appropriate guidance on how to address each situation as a victim or someone who is aware of a violation.
95. **(ii) Host nation.** A further unforeseen issue was the critical spotlight Samoa fell under as host of CRC84 due to the majority of children who participated being from the Apia region. This meant that the newspaper articles during the course of the week highlighted mainly Samoan related issues, despite the country not being under review. This had two consequences – first, the state had no right to reply within the formal programme, and second, the Committee was unable to advise on or address with the host government, any issues it became aware of during CRC84.
96. This could be addressed in any future regional sessions by taking three courses of action; (1) Clarify the role of the host government through a Terms of Reference that sets the expectations from the Committee and the government to avoid any diplomatic incidents; (2) collating the issues into a document for consideration by the Committee at Samoa’s next review, and providing the same as a confidential report to the host government immediately after the session; and (3) ensuring wider regional participation of stakeholders and fostering more regionally based discussions so that the primary focus is not on the host country.
97. **(iii) Committee working hours.** One of the criticisms levelled at CRC84 prior to it commencing was that this was merely a Pacific holiday for the Committee members. However, members worked in excess of 50 hour over five working days with little or no recovery time following journeys taking up to 48 hours to reach Samoa. With the side events running over the lunchtime break and evening functions on four out of five nights it was felt by some that the programme was a little too intense. Whilst the consensus of members was that side events substantially contributing to the overall outcomes it would also have been pragmatic to consider the need for breaks.

98. **(iv) Meaningful participation of marginalised groups.** Whilst the level of meaningful participation of children was at the heart of the positive outcomes of CRC84 there was room for improvement. Notably the inclusion of children with disabilities, child street vendors (a particular issue in Samoa) and other marginalised groups. Efforts were made during the SPC RRRT scoping mission in January and several NGOs working with these groups were met and informed of the upcoming opportunity. This led to the participation of some children with disabilities in the formal committee sessions but did not result in the widespread participation of children in all of the demographics mentioned above and any future regional sessions must go to further lengths to ensure this happens.
99. Immediate plans have subsequently been made by SPC RRRT to partially address this, including ensuring children are central to the review consultation process and are notified of the outcomes. Furthermore, a panel discussion on CRC84 and its outcomes is being planned as part of the 75th anniversary of the signing of the UN Charter, which will include children who attended the Samoa session.
100. **(v) Dialogue and concluding observations.** Among the Committee members, the secretariat and other Geneva based groups the consensus was that the dialogue had been enriched, was on more of an equal footing and the outcomes more contextualised. The view among the state delegations was not as definitive with some feeling that the Committee had been adversarial and did not well understand the challenges faced by their country in coming to their conclusions. This was especially true where the delegation had not undertaken a mock. As a result, they felt under-prepared and that their delegation's composition could have had more relevant areas of expertise.
101. There are two separate, but connected, issues here. The first is the preparedness and suitability of the delegation. This can only be addressed through greater awareness of the work of the treaty bodies, how the process works and with the political will to appoint the required people to the delegation. CRC84 proved that regional sessions go a long way in achieving this and it could be contended that over time this new modality could address this concern.
102. The second issue raised by some state delegation members was that the dialogue was adversarial in nature and that the members did not understand the country situations. Nonetheless, to a certain degree CRC84 demonstrated how a more constructive dialogue can naturally occur at a regional session through the members being immersed in regional issues and proceedings adopting a culturally relevant approach. Furthermore, whilst some in the state delegations felt the dialogue and concluding observations did not convey a deep appreciation of the country context it is clear from the findings above that significant progress was made in this regard.
103. Possible means of addressing the above issues include; a briefing for Committee members on the region during the session prior to regional session (e.g. lunchtime briefing); distribution of a background note on the region to Committee members prior to the session; better timing of session - this session took place almost immediately after a 4-week session in Geneva, which did not give much time for Committee members or the Secretariat to prepare.

Conclusions

104. In drafting this review every comment, every survey, every interview has been taken into consideration with an attempt made to represent every substantive point of view about the outcomes of CRC84. The aim has been to provide a fair, accurate and complete account of an historic event to inform future thinking around the treaty bodies. CRC84 did not test every aspect of what a regional session could possibly encounter. The nature of the Pacific meant that there were fewer concerns than normal over security or reprisals but due consideration in the task force

to these were given including discussion of potential options in related to natural disasters. In addition, the partners in this endeavour had to address both the measles epidemic and the COVID-19 crisis. In this regard, the session did test a significant number of elements of regional sessions, in one of the most remote parts of the world, in the immediate aftermath of a tragic measles epidemic, two cyclones and at the outset of the global Covid-19 pandemic.

105. Yet, all indicators suggest CRC84 was an unmitigated success. Out of the 156 survey responses, 29 face to face interviews and numerous news articles, the unanimous view was that CRC84 brought significant value to the treaty body process. It was telling that even those who had been sceptical prior to the event were effusive in their praise for it afterwards. This positive outlook was shared by the children, Committee members, state delegations, host, country, civil society organisations, NHRIs, the judiciary and development partners.

"Hosting this milestone meeting in Samoa was crucial for enhancing the visibility of the Convention in our region. The session allowed for the Blue Pacific people, especially the children, to effectively and actively engage with the Committee. Samoa encourages all other treaty bodies to follow the great example that this Committee has set."

Prime Minister of Samoa, Honourable Tuilaepa Sa'ilele Malielegaoi

"This has been absolutely invaluable"

Child Participant

"This programme is one that comes once in a lifetime and [...] it has helped me decide my future."

Child Participant

"[Was CRC84 a success?] A resounding yes. Amazed at the impact. There was great public interest. High participation from children, civil society, government officials. Every actor who has come in contact with the Session has been profoundly changed."

Justice Vui Nelson, Committee on the Rights of the Child

"[My] perspective on the regional session is overwhelmingly positive".

Bragi Guðbrandsson Committee on the Rights of the Child

"The decision to come to Samoa was one of the most important that the Committee has made. [I] very much support holding future sessions at the regional level. Will raise this with the Bureau. This has been a milestone. Things have to change."

Amal Aldoseri, Member of the Committee on the Rights of the Child

“What really stood out was understanding, connecting and knowing how passionate and committed the Committee members were towards ensuring children all over the world deserve the best in life with no discrimination. This has made me realize the importance of working right and being supportive with children and families at grass root level.”

Cook Islands State Delegate

“UNICEF has been more engaged at this regional session and foresee this will result in more follow up and more impact.”

UNICEF Pacific Representative

“This has raised the interest in UN treaty participation in the Pacific, not just in the countries where their governments are officially participating, but across the Pacific, and in a very substantive way.”

Orest Nowosad, Chief, Groups in Focus Section, Human Rights Treaties Branch, OHCHR

106. The costs of holding CRC84 should be considered in two ways. The first is to standardise the comparison because CRC84 was not directly comparable to a Geneva session. The added benefits of the regional session were numerous. Over 1000 people from the Pacific attended proceedings and extrapolating the survey results indicates that this led to around 885 people learning about child rights, the work of the Committee and other human rights mechanisms, with around 700 changing their views on child rights as a result.²⁷ To deliver these results through a series of workshops and awareness raising programmes would likely cost more than the total cost of CRC84 alone. The hundreds of column inches that were written, nationally, regionally and internationally, further expanded the scope of this learning. Again, this level of coverage and interest would cost in the tens of thousands of dollars. It has already been shown that holding the same event with the same stakeholders in Geneva would be at the expense of at least 26 million air kilometres. It would also cost at least \$1.5m more.²⁸
107. If one’s goal was to minimise costs, the only viable option would be video conference reviews. This option was discussed with all of the Committee members in their CRC84 exit interview as well as with a number of other stakeholders. The response was almost unanimous and the level of opposition to this modality was fierce. Committee member Philip Jaffe summed up the general feeling calling the two approaches ‘night and day’.

“Review by videoconference does not have the same range of emotional depth. Meaningful communication is more than just words and requires live human contact.”

Philip Jaffe, Committee on the Rights of the Child

108. The survey responses suggest that videoconference does not deliver with respect to the state dialogue, and also excludes the possibility of the other benefits that CRC84 demonstrated regional sessions can deliver.

²⁷ 149 of 155 survey respondents answered the question on whether they had learned about child rights and 132 indicated that they had. 147 answered the question on whether their views on child rights had changed as a result of attending CRC84 and 108 indicated that they had.

²⁸ Based on an additional 800 participants travelling to Geneva from the Pacific at an average cost of USD\$1,875 per person for flights, accommodation and living expenses.

109. A sensible yardstick is to consider the value for money of regional sessions in relation to implementation of the convention. In this regard, the evidence appears to suggest that regional sessions are transformative. This should come as little surprise – the treaty body system should be a process and dialogue between the people based in the state under review (that is, the rights holders, civil society, NHRIs and state delegations) and the experts of the treaty body system. Holding the review in Geneva so far away from the majority of these groups means they are missing from the start of the process (the state dialogue), yet they are the ones who drive it between reviews. Minimising the voices of the peoples at the heart of any Convention means they are not given a meaningful opportunity to lead the dialogue and outcomes as they should.
110. The outcomes of treaty body reviews provide a road map for national implementation through the concluding observations, so it is therefore essential that the rights holders are central to the dialogue and the participation of state and non-state actors is also guaranteed.
111. CRC84 embraced this people centred approach, arguably more than any other treaty body review in history. By enabling 1000 constituents of the convention access and meaningful participation the potential for implementation has been transformed. It is for this reason why it can be considered an unmitigated success, notwithstanding the areas for improvement. There is no reason why the same success would not be enjoyed by all treaty bodies adopting a regional session approach, at least in part.
112. There is an assumption that the observed outcomes will lead to greater implementation of the Convention and this should now be tested. The theory of change illustrated in Figure 1 demonstrates the breadth of evidence CRC84 generated to support this hypothesis and can also be used to monitor long term impact. Each output or outcome area is a hyperlink so can be clicked to be taken to the relevant part of the review for further information.

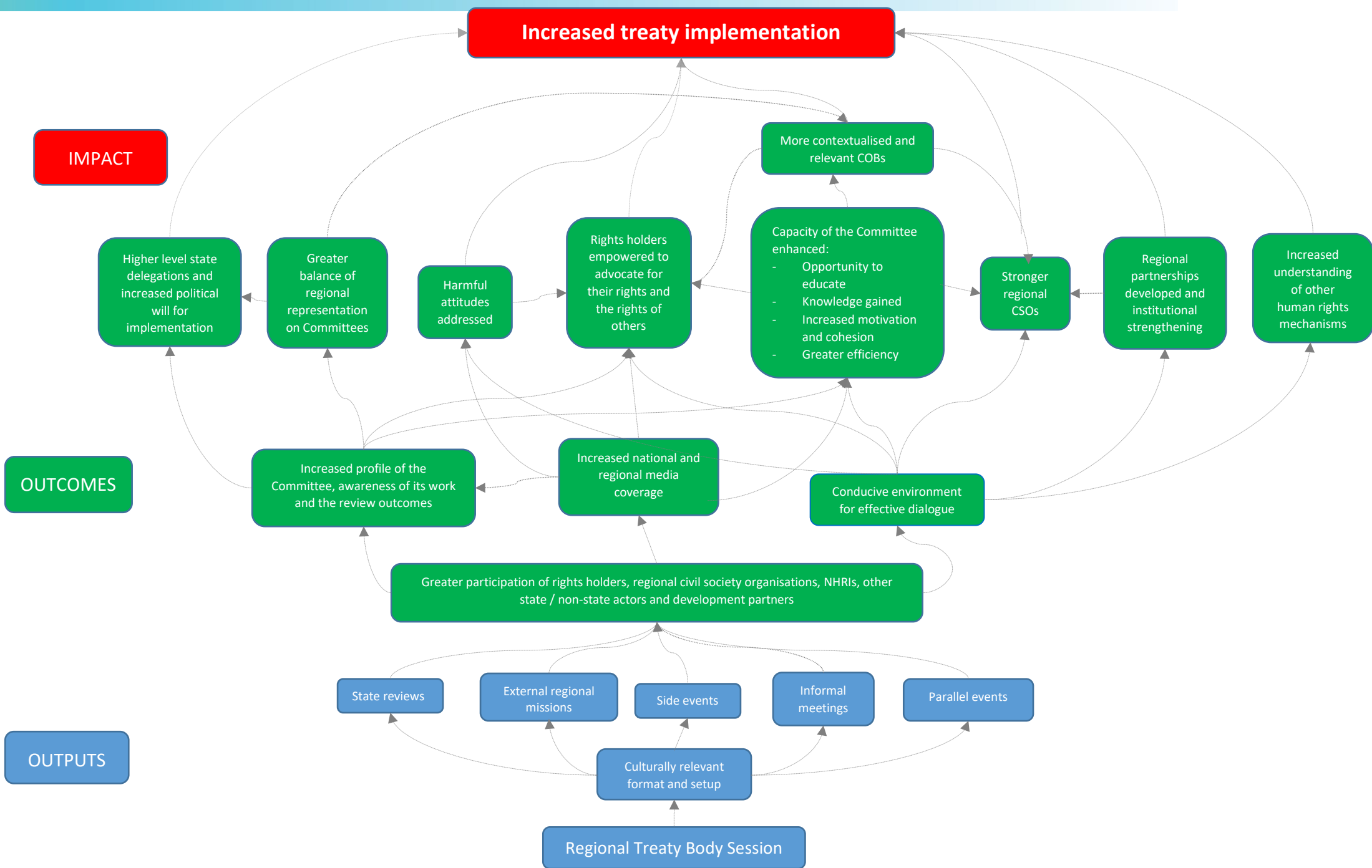


Figure 1. Regional Treaty Body Sessions: Theory of Change. Based on observed outcomes of CRC84.

Annex A – M&E Interviews Undertaken by RRRT

Members of the Committee on the Rights of the Child

- Ms. Suzanne Aho Assouma
- Ms. Amal Salman Aldoseri
- Mr. Bragi Gudbrandsson
- Mr. Philip Jaffe
- Mr. Gehad Madi
- Mr. Benyam Dawit Mezmur
- Mr. Clarence Nelson
- Mr. Luis Ernesto Pedernera Reyna
- Mr. José Angel Rodríguez Reyes
- Ms. Aissatou Alassane Sidikou
- Ms. Ann Marie Skelton
- Ms. Velina Todorova
- Ms. Renate Winter

Children

- Child moderator A
- Child moderator B
- Child moderator C

United Nations Offices

- Mr Orest Nowosad (OHCHR)
- Ms Allegra Franchetti (OHCHR)
- Ms. Chanmi Kim (OHCHR)
- Mr Sheldon Yett (UNICEF)
- Ms Talei Cama (UNICEF)

State Delegations

- Cook Islands
- Federated States of Micronesia
- Tuvalu
- Samoa

Civil society organisations

- Child Rights Connect
- Nuanua O Le Alofa (NOLA)
- Anonymous Samoan CSO

Annex B – CRC84 Activity Planning Framework

	Task	Lead Agency	Support agencies	Focal points	Status	Notes, progress and deadlines
Finance	Task 1	<i>Eg. OHCHR</i>	<i>RRRT</i>	<i>example@one.un.org example2@spc.int</i>	<i>Ongoing</i>	<i>Draft budget to be circulated by 28 May</i>
	Task 2					
Logistics	Task 3					
	Task 4					
	Task 5					
	Task 6					
	Task 7					
	Task 8					
	Task 9					
Programme and engagement strategies	Task 10					
	Task 11					
	Task 12					
	Task 13					
	Task 14					
	Task 15					
	Task 16					
	Task 17					
	Task 18					

Annex C – CRC84 Task Summary

Should future regional sessions occur it may be helpful for the organisers to consult the list below of the main tasks undertaken for CRC84, who was the responsible agency and any relevant notes.

Task	Responsible agencies	Notes
<i>Finances</i>		
Budget management	RRRT, UN Resident Coordinators Office Samoa, Government of Samoa	A draft budget was maintained and updated throughout the planning process by RRRT. Initially costs were estimated and then revised as quotes were received. A contingency budget of 20% was set aside at the outset and this proved very helpful. The draft budget was shared at the planning Committee meetings. Unless any costs were borne by agencies directly all procurement was undertaken in accordance with the SPC procurement policy.
<i>Travel, DSAs & Protocols</i>		
Member & OHCHR DSAs	RRRT	The SPC DSA rate was applied and deductions made for accommodation and any meals which were provided. DSAs were distributed by RRRT upon arrival.
Member & OHCHR flights	RRRT, Government of Samoa (internal transport)	A travel agency was selected by tender and all bookings coordinated by the RRRT support team. This requires a considerable amount of work in the build-up and to be on standby whilst travel is ongoing. Given the long nature of the journeys it was necessary for members to arrive at least a day in advance, and this must be budgeted for.
Note verbales	OHCHR	NVs were sent out by the secretariat of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, initially to the Government of Samoa to invite them to host the 84 th session, and subsequently to the states under review.
Protocols and internal travel	Government of Samoa	Protocol services were provided by the host government for all Committee members and any ministers in state delegations.
<i>Venue</i>		
Venue booking and management	RRRT	A venue for the sessions was selected after quotes were solicited from all potential suppliers in Apia that were deemed to be of the necessary standard and have the required facilities. The requirements were a large conference room for the formal sessions, high speed internet, restaurant, sufficient rooms for the members, state delegations, secretariat and other interested parties and additional break out rooms for state delegation discussions and bilateral meetings.

		<p>The Government of Samoa was able to negotiate excellent rates and a conference package was agreed which covered breakfast and lunch each day for the members and secretariat. Due to lunch being provided during the public side events catering was initially provided for 60 persons. The turnout was much higher than expected and this had to be increased to 100 persons each day plus 100 school lunches for the children attending.</p> <p>During the event a communication channel (via WhatsApp) was established between the venue manager, conference manager, bookings manager and RRRT to deal with issues as they arose and this was very effective.</p>
<i>Formal Programme</i>		
Mock sessions	UNICEF	All mock sessions were coordinated and facilitated by UNICEF Pacific, and held in Suva the week prior to CRC84. Fiji is en route for all state delegations so this made sense from a practical and cost perspective and also meant delegations had these preparations fresh in their mind for the review proper.
Committee Programme	OHCHR	The formal programme for CRC84 was developed by the OHCHR secretariat for the Committee and endorsed by the Committee Bureau. It largely followed the usual programme for a regular session but allowed for several additional sessions which were of great value. These included two sessions with children – one at the very start of the week and one at the very end. These enabled children to raise priority issues at the outset and then provide feedback on the process at its culmination. These additional sessions also allowed for a focused session on children and climate change – a priority issue for the region and for the Committee.
Webcasting	UN Resident Coordinator's Office, OHCHR	All formal sessions were webcast on the UN Facebook page and delayed broadcast made on UNTV. Testing for the necessary bandwidth was undertaken the week prior to CRC84.
Accreditation	UN Resident Coordinator's Office, Government of Samoa, OHCHR	The regular accreditation platform was used for the registration process and badging undertaken at the venue over the weekend before the start of CRC84 and during the week, to accommodate late registrations.
Participation of children	Government of Samoa, UN Resident Coordinator's Office	Transporting all of the children from their schools each day and obtaining the necessary permissions from teachers and parents for their participation was a considerable job and handled by the Ministry of Education. The Ministry of Education were also responsible for organising the National Schools Debate the week prior to CRC84, in collaboration with the UN Resident Coordinator's Office.

Interpreters	RRRT	<p>A team of five interpreters was appointed – two French/English, three Spanish/English. The intention was for all formal sessions to have interpretation for English, French and Spanish speakers and also to provide Spanish interpretation at the side events so that the Chair could participate. Due to Covid-19 travel restrictions one Spanish/English interpreter was unable to travel and so the team was reduced to four. An informal replacement for the side events was provided by the UN Resident Coordinator’s Office. Assembling a team of accredited interpreters who were all willing to work with one another was a challenge and was only possible with the assistance of the SPC languages unit. This task requires considerable time for the planning.</p> <p>Another critical aspect of this task is the provision of adequate equipment. Interpretation booths were sourced in-country and headsets/microphones were shipped in from New Caledonia.</p>
Medical support	Government of Samoa	A room was set aside as a sick bay and medical staff were on site throughout the week to deal with any medical issues.
<i>Events Outside Formal Sessions</i>		
Side and parallel events	RRRT	<p>The concept and logistics for all side and parallel events was developed by RRRT. It was initially proposed by the planning Committee to hold side events at an alternative venue as there was only indoor capacity for the formal programme at the chosen site. However, a marquee with 150 persons capacity was hired and all side and parallel events held in the grounds of the venue for the formal programme. This proved to be very effective in ensuring a good audience. Having to travel off site would not have been feasible within the 2 hour lunchtime slot. The ‘Talanoa tent’ was fully equipped with TV screens, sound system, chairs and tables for the organiser of each event to use as they wished (and without cost). Side event concept notes were approved by the Committee Bureau and all parallel events were accepted if they linked to children’s rights or the wider protection and promotion of human rights. It was the responsibility of each event organiser to promote their event to their potential audience.</p>
Promotion	RRRT	Promotion of all side and parallel events was undertaken by RRRT and several full page adverts taken out in the main national newspaper. A side/parallel events poster was created and circulated via email to all in-country networks.
Evening events	Various	Potential hosts interested in holding an evening event were required to coordinate with the session planning Committee. These were subsequently hosted by; (1) the Government of Samoa; (2) The Government of the UK; (3) RRRT, Govts of NZ and Australia and UN RC’s

		Office; and (4) Ministry of Justice. Each host was responsible for their own logistics and invites.
Site visits	Government of Samoa	The Ministry of Justice and Courts Administration organised a number of site visits for Committee members at the weekends to places of interest. E.g. children's refuge centre
Security and transport to and from official venue	Government of Samoa	The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade developed and maintained a matrix for the organising committee to plan and manage all internal security and transport for all events.
<i>External Missions</i>		
Planning and delivery	RRRT, with the support of OHCHR	A two day programme of meetings was developed by RRRT for the respective members travelling to Fiji and Vanuatu to meet with various stakeholders and deliver a public lecture at the national university in each country. The aim of the missions was twofold; (1) To enhance the knowledge of the Committee on Pacific child rights issues; and (2) to enhance the knowledge of stakeholders on the rights of the child and the work of the Committee RRRT was responsible for all logistics, including booking flights, accommodation and in-country transportation and accompanying the Committee member on each country throughout their programme.
<i>Communications</i>		
Press Conferences and briefing	Government of Samoa, UN Resident Coordinator's Office, OHCHR, UNICEF, RRRT	A press briefing was held the week prior to CRC84 to publicise the proceedings and address issues relating to child safety. Press conferences were held on the first and last day of CRC84 at the venue and the following week at the One UN house to announce the COBs. A media advisory, a joint press release and a press release from the Committee were also produced.
Communication strategy	RRRT, OHCHR, Child Rights Connect, UNICEF, UN Resident Coordinator's Office, UNIC Canberra	A communications strategy was drafted by RRRT and refined in consultation with other key agencies to ensure consistent messaging. Each agency was responsible for their own communications activities prior to, during and after CRC84.
Visibility	RRRT, Government of Samoa, UN Resident Coordinator's Office	A number of visibility items were purchased by various agencies as part of the communications strategy. These included Pacific style shirts for all Committee members, OHCHR and RRRT team members, banners for the main venue and side event tent and a welcome bag for the members. Full page colour advertisements were taken out in the national newspaper in the week prior to and during CRC84 to publicise the side events.
<i>Monitoring & Evaluation</i>		

M&E plan	RRRT, OHCHR, Child Rights Connect	An M&E plan was drafted by RRRT and refined after consultations with Child Rights Connect and OHCHR. The plan was executed by RRRT through a survey completed by 156 attendees of CRC84, face to face interviews with all Committee members and other stakeholders, media monitoring and desk based research. Child Rights Connect also carried out monitoring activities.
Review Report	RRRT	This review report was drafted by RRRT as defined in the methodology section of the introduction.

Tentative Programme of Work
84th Extraordinary session
of the Committee on the Rights of the Child
2 to 6 March 2020 Apia, Samoa

Monday, 2 March Mtg. No. 2461 (a.m.) Mtg. No. 2462 (p.m.)	9:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.	Opening/ Adoption of agenda/ Public presentations by UN and regional agencies, Samoan government and other stakeholders
	11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.	Public meeting – Meeting with Samoan children
	12:30 to 2:30 p.m.	LUNCH EVENT Human rights and Children in the Pacific – The importance of a contextualised approach utilising cultural values and faiths
	2:30 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.	Closed meeting
Tuesday, 3 March Mtg. No. 2463 (a.m.) Mtg. No. 2464 (p.m.)	9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.	Tuvalu CRC
	12:00 to 2:00 p.m.	LUNCH EVENT Dialogue on the Right to Health of Children in the Samoan context
	2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.	Tuvalu CRC
	4:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.	Closed meeting
Wednesday, 4 March Mtg. No. 2465 (a.m.) Mtg. No. 2466 (p.m.)	9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.	Federated States of Micronesia CRC
	12:00 to 2:00 p.m.	LUNCH EVENT Early childhood development in Emergencies
	2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.	Federated States of Micronesia CRC
	4:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.	Closed meeting
Thursday, 5 March Mtg. No. 2467 (a.m.) Mtg. No. 2468 (p.m.)	9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.	Cook Islands CRC
	12:00 to 2:00 p.m.	LUNCH EVENT A dive into the Blue Pacific
	2:00 p.m. to 4:00 p.m.	Cook Islands CRC
	4:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.	Closed meeting
Friday, 6 March Mtg. No. 2469 (a.m.) Mtg. No. 2470 (p.m.)	9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.	Public meeting – Event on 30 th anniversary of the Convention
	12:00 to 2:00 p.m.	LUNCH EVENT Children’s right to protection from abuse, neglect, maltreatment or exploitation
	2:00 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.	Public meeting – Event on Climate change
	4:30 to 5:00 p.m.	Concluding session

Annex E – Side/Parallel Events Programme



The 84th Extraordinary Session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child

Taumeasina Island Resort 2–6 March

A UN event in partnership with the Pacific Community (SPC) and hosted by the Government of Samoa



The 84th Extraordinary Session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child is historic. It is the first time any of the United Nations Treaty Bodies have held a regional session outside of Geneva or New York. It's happening here in Samoa, and you're invited to attend! During the formal programme the Committee will review the Cook Islands, Tuvalu and FSM in relation to their realisation of child rights. There will also be events on climate change and an opportunity for children to meet the members. Alongside the formal programme there is a week of parallel and side events that are all open to the public. These will be held in the 'SPC RRRR Talanoa Tent' on the lawns of Taumeasina Island Resort. Each of the lunchtime events will be held in a talanoa format, with the audience invited to participate. All parallel events also welcome the attendance of children, students, civil society organisations, and you! The full side events programme and events description is below:

Time / Day	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
PARALLEL EVENTS					
9 – 10am					Challenges and opportunities of climate justice (ADB, OHCHR Pacific, UNEP)
10 – 11am			The Universal Periodic Review - CSO Shadow Reporting (SPC RRRR)	Climate change and child rights in the Pacific (PISFCC, OHCHR Pacific)	
11am – 12pm					
OFFICIAL LUNCHTIME SIDE EVENTS					
12-2pm	Pacific culture and faiths – a barrier or enabler of child rights? (SPC RRRR)	Dialogue on the right to health of children in the Samoan context (Samoa NHRI, Government of Samoa)	Early childhood development in emergencies (UNICEF, Government of Samoa)	A dive into the Blue Pacific (SPC RRRR and Pacific CSOs)	Children's right to protection from abuse and neglect (UNICEF, Government of Samoa)
PARALLEL EVENTS					
2 – 3pm	Effective implementation of human rights and the SDGs – an introduction to NMIRFPs (SPC RRRR)	The Human Rights Council – effective engagement strategies (SPC RRRR)			
3 – 4pm	The UN Special Procedures – who are they and how can they help in the Pacific? (SPC RRRR)		Alliance 8.7 (ILO)	Children's right to freedom (Brown Girl Woke)	
4 – 5pm			CSO Capacity Building—CRC Monitoring and Reporting (Child Rights Connect)	CSO Capacity Building child participation (Child Rights Connect)	

Monday 2 March

10am -11am – 'Effective implementation of Human Rights and the Sustainable Development Goals' (SPC RRRR)

How can effective implementation of rights and the SDGs be achieved with few resources, whilst ensuring all relevant stakeholders are involved and coordinated? Come to find out!

12.15pm -1.45pm – 'Pacific cultures and faiths – barriers or enablers of Child Rights?' (SPC RRRR)

Culture and faith are often viewed as incompatible with rights but this session will demystify that, exploring the links and showing how human rights can strengthen culture and faith.

4pm – 5pm – 'The UN Special Procedures – Who are they and how they can help in the Pacific' (SPC RRRR)

This session will provide an understanding of what the UN Special Procedures are and how they can help in the Pacific.

Tuesday 3 March

12.15pm -1.45pm – 'Dialogue on the right to health of children in the Samoan context' (National Human Rights Institution of Samoa / Office of the Ombudsman and the Government of Samoa)

Here the right to health is discussed in light of the recent measles epidemic. The discussion will look into individual v collective rights and how the right to health of children can be realized in the Pacific.

2pm – 3pm – 'The Human Rights Council – effective engagement strategies' (SPC RRRR)

The Human Rights Council is a geopolitical power hub, yet the Pacific voice is largely unheard. This session will introduce the audience to the HRC and explore how the Pacific can better influence the global debate.

Wednesday 4 March

10am -11am – 'The Universal Periodic Review' (SPC RRRR)

The UPR is an opportunity for CSOs and activists to raise awareness among states of the issues they work on and put them on the national agenda. This session will explain how CSOs and activists can and should make the most of this opportunity.

12.15pm -1.45pm – 'Early childhood development in emergencies' (UNICEF)

How can children, especially the very young, be protected in times of emergency? This talanoa discussion invites a range of stakeholders to discuss how in order to protect babies and children from psychological and physical harm during emergencies.

3pm – 4pm – 'Alliance 8.7' (ILO)

Alliance 8.7 is working for a world without forced labour, modern slavery, human trafficking, and child labour; Come and discuss how a national mechanism to achieve this goal might be established.

4pm – 5pm – 'CRC Monitoring and Reporting for CSOs' (Child Rights Connect)

How can civil society and children seize the unique opportunity of CRC8, to seek long-term impact in their countries? Child Rights Connect is organizing a capacity building session for civil society and children to answer this critical question.

Thursday 5 March

10am -11am – 'Climate Change and Child Rights in the Pacific' (PISFCC, OHCHR Pacific)

As climate change threatens the very future and health of Pacific children transformational change is required. Join the

discussion and hear about youth initiatives in the Pacific to make the world stand up and listen.

12.15pm - 1.45pm – 'A dive into the Blue Pacific' (SPC RRRR)

The Pacific enjoys a rich diversity of languages, cultures, geographies, challenges and successes. Come and engage with CSOs from 8 Pacific countries to discuss shared and unique issues in realising child rights in the region.

3pm – 4pm – 'Child rights to freedom' (Brown Girl Woke)

Come watch youth in Samoa use song, dance and monologue to take you on a journey child life in Samoa

4pm – 5pm – 'Child Participation' (Child Rights Connect)

Through the 2 hours session, Child Rights Connect will provide technical information and tips on how to effectively engage and empower children through these UN processes.

Friday 6 March

9am -12pm – 'Challenges and opportunities of climate justice' (Asian Development Bank, OHCHR Pacific, UNEP)

The discussion will focus on climate actions so far taken by child and youth activists around the world and how such actions were received by the judiciaries.

12.15pm -1.45pm – 'Child's right to protection from abuse and neglect' (UNICEF and Government of Samoa)

Talanoa participants will be invited to speak about key child protection concerns faced by Pacific children, causes, drivers and contributing factors leading to these issues, and existing systems addressing them.



To attend the formal sessions you must first register for accreditation at: <https://doh.un.org/level/22238/> The formal event programme can be viewed at: <https://doh.un.org/level/22238/>

For more information contact ashleyb@spc.int

Annex F –Programme of Events for External Missions to Vanuatu and Fiji

Dr Phillip Jaffe, CRC Committee Member

Vanuatu Visit Program

Visit Dates: 9 – 10 March 2020

Monday 9th March	
9.00 – 9.30	Courtesy call to Ministry of Foreign Affairs – Director General and staff of UN Desk. <i>Venue: Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation</i>
10.00 – 11.30	Meeting with Ministry of Justice and Community Services – Child Desk, DWA, Correctional Services, Law Reform Commission, Disability <i>Venue: MSG Conference room</i>
12 – 1pm	<i>Lunch</i>
1.00 – 2.00	Juvenile Justice
2.30 – 4.30	Meeting with Law Reform Commission and Correctional Services on the Juvenile Justice Bill and Juvenile program <i>Possible visit to youth in prison</i>
6 – 7.30	Reception hosted by British High Commission. Also to commemorate Commonwealth Day <i>Venue: TBC</i>
Tuesday 10th March	
9.00 – 10.30	Human Rights Committee <i>Members include representatives from Civil Society Organisations</i> <i>Venue: MSG Conference room</i>
11.00 – 12.00	Individual meetings / briefings with CSOs working on child protection issues. <i>Presentation and discussing child rights issues by individuals or groups groups/individuals.</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - NNEFA (Youth group) - Michelle Pendergrast - Nikita Taiwia <i>Venue: MSG Board room</i>
1.30 – 2.30	School visit – Pikinini Playtime Informal session with children and teachers to discuss children’s issues <i>Venue: Pikinini Playtime school</i>
2.30 – 4.00 (1.5 hrs)	Civil Society Organisations Discuss the role of the CRC Committee and contributions of CSOs in particular, submission of alternative reports and engaging with the Committee and priority issues for children in Vanuatu.

	<i>Venue: MSG</i>
5.30 – 7.30 (2 hrs)	Public lecture at USP Law School Topic: The Convention on the Rights of the Child: A source of inspiration for the ages! <i>Venue: USP</i>
Wed 11th March	
9.00 – 10.00	Malvatumauri Discussions on child rights/protection issues with Malvatumauri (National Council of Chiefs) <i>Venue: Malvatumauri office</i>
<i>Departs Port Vila 1250</i>	

Programme

Visit to Fiji

Mr Bragi Gudbrandsonn, Member of the Committee of the Rights of the Child

9-10 March 2020

Date		Time	Suggested meetings
Monday 9 March	Government and national coordination committee block	9:00 – 9:45	Meeting with Fiji Government Courtesy visit: Hon Minister for Foreign Affairs and Permanent Secretary
		10:00 – 10:30	Meeting with Fiji Government Hon Minister for Education, Heritage & Arts
		10: 30 – 11.00	Meeting with Director of Public Prosecution
		11.15 – 12.30	Meeting with National Coordinating Committee on Children - Includes a range of agencies
	UN and CSO block	12.45 – 14.00	(Lunch) Meeting with UN Country Team - Includes a range of agencies
		14.15 – 16.15	Meeting with Fiji Civil Society Organizations - Including Fiji National Youth Council, a range of CSOs working on children’s rights and coordination bodies
		16:30 – 17:15	Meeting with Fiji Human Rights and Anti-Discrimination Commission
		18:00	Cocktail (co-hosted by British High Commission, Australian High Commission and New Zealand High Commission)
Tuesday 10 March	Parliament, legal institutions and law enforcement block	9:00 – 9:45	Meeting with Parliament - Standing Committee on Justice, Law and Human Rights
		10:00 – 10:45	Meeting with Government - Hon. Attorney General and Solicitor General
	Schools	11.00 – 11.45	Meeting with School - Frank Hilton school
	Regional Academic Institution	12:30 – 14:00	Public lecture and Q&A at the University of the South Pacific - Topic: The application of CRC in addressing child sexual abuse <i>Key-note address by Mr. Guodbrandsonn, Q&A with the public.</i>
			Travel to Nausori
Mr. Gudbrandsonn departs Suva on Tuesday 10 March at 5:30pm			

Annex G – Comparative Table of Culturally Specific Concluding Recommendations Against Previous Session

Country	CRC84 COBs	Previous COBs
Cook Islands	<p>CRC/C/COK/CO/2-5 (2020):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. “Strengthen awareness raising programmes...and ensure that children, parents, island communities, traditional, religious and community leaders and civil society play a key role in such initiatives....” (para. 15a) 2. The Committee “remains concerned that children cannot effectively participate in the making of decisions that affect them within the family and community, including owing to the prevalence of the traditional societal attitudes, which hinder respect for the views of the child.” (para. 22) 3. “With reference to its general comment No. 8 (2006) on corporal punishment, the Committee urges the State party to: ... (b) Intensify efforts to promote positive, non-violent and participatory forms of child-rearing and discipline, including by strengthening awareness-raising programmes and campaigns targeting children, parents, teachers and traditional, religious and community leaders.” (para. 26) 4. “Noting that children deprived of a family environment are traditionally placed in the care of the extended family, the Committee is concerned about the limited support provided to the care-giver relatives.” (para. 33) 5. “With reference to its general comment No. 9 (2006) on the rights of children with disabilities, the Committee recommends that the State party, with the full and effective participation of children with disabilities: ... Undertake awareness-raising campaigns aimed at government officials, the public, traditional, religious and community leaders and families to promote a positive image of such children with a view to ensuring their full inclusion into society.” (para 37d) 6. “The Committee commends the decreasing number of cases where children have been formally charged with offences under the Penal Code, mainly owing to conflicts being addressed through community mediation and <i>Te Koro Akaau</i>.” (para. 49) 	<p>CRC/C/COK/CO/1 (2012)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. “While the Committee notes the State party’s efforts to encourage children to have their opinions and views expressed, it is concerned about the traditional societal attitudes towards children, in particular children with disabilities and child victims of sexual abuse that hamper the realization of this principle....” (para. 29) 2. “...The Committee is also concerned about the limited opportunities for the child to express his/her own views in the family and in the community and in particular about the lack of effective children’s councils in all schools.” (para. 29) 3. “The Committee is also concerned that due to traditional practices, a large proportion of children deprived of family environment, including child victims of sexual abuse, enter into informal fostering by relatives without State support, oversight or assessment.” (para. 39) 4. “The Committee is concerned at the lack of monitoring with respect to both domestic and intercountry adoptions as well as at the widespread practice of informal adoptions within the State party in the absence of proper State oversight or assessment.” (para. 41) 5. “The Committee urges the State party to:...Develop awareness-raising programmes and campaigns for the public including children, with a view to

	7. “Continue to promote, in line with international standards, non-judicial measures, such as diversion, community mediation and counselling, including the Te Koro Akaau, for children accused of criminal offences.” (para. 50d)	combating sociocultural attitudes that tolerate sexual abuse of children.” (para. 56b)
FSM	<p>CRC/C/FSM/CO/2 (2020):</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. “The Committee is seriously concerned that: ... Customary marriages, which have no minimum age limit, are still valid.” (para. 19d) ... The Committee urges the State party to: ... Explicitly prohibit by law all marriage, including customary marriages for boys and girls under the age of 18 years, and ensure that the minimum age of marriage is established in law at 18 for both girls and boys in all states, including in the outer islands.” (para. 20 b) 2. “With reference to joint general recommendation No. 31 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/general comment No. 18 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on harmful practices (2014), the Committee urges the State party to take all necessary measures to eliminate child marriages and raise awareness of the harmful effects of child marriage on the physical well-being and mental health of girls.” (para. 39) 3. “Taking note of target 10.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Committee recommends that the State party: Prohibit, by law, discrimination against children on all grounds covered under the Convention., including religion and disability.” (para. 22a) 4. “The Committee notes with appreciation the information provided during the dialogue that children’s best interests is part of the life of communities in the State party...” (para. 23) 5. “The Committee recommends that the State party: ... Promote meaningful and empowered participation of all children within the family, communities and schools, and include children in decision-making on all matters related to children, including environmental matters.” (para. 28b) 6. “The Committee notes that, in the absence of social welfare services, most children who cannot stay with their families are placed with extended family. However it is concerned about the absence of temporary safe care options available in cases where the extended family does not take care of children, 	<p>CRC/C/15/Add.86 (1998)</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. “The Committee is concerned that domestic legislation does not fully conform to the provisions and principles of the Convention. ... The Committee is also concerned at the possible conflicts between customary and statutory law, in particular for marriage and adoption.” (para. 6) 2. “The Committee recommends that the State party initiate a comprehensive review of existing legislation, both at the national and the state level, with a view to undertaking adequate legislative reforms to ensure full conformity of its legislation with the principles and provisions of the Convention. The Committee recommends that all appropriate measures be undertaken by the State party, including awareness-raising campaigns, to harmonize customary practices and law, such as those pertaining to marriage and adoption, with the principles and provisions of the Convention. In case of conflict between customary and statutory law, the principles of non-discrimination (art. 2) and of the best interests of the child (art. 3) should be the primary considerations.” (para. 22) 3. “... The Committee is also concerned at the existence of a caste system, especially in Yap State, and its incompatibility with the provisions of article 2.” (para. 15) 4. “The Committee is concerned that both customary and statutory adoption, including intercountry

	<p>and about discriminatory stereotypes regarding the roles and responsibilities of women and men in the family.” (para. 42)</p> <p>7. “The Committee notes that most adoptions in the State party occur by the extended family or through customary adoption and that there are no proper guidelines for the adoption process.” (para. 44)</p> <p>8. “The Committee ... is concerned about: ... Limited access to safe reproductive and sexual health services, education and contraceptives, especially in the outer islands, due to limited supply, cultural attitudes and fear of stigmatization.” (para. 52c)</p>	<p>adoption, do not conform fully with the principles and provisions of the Convention, in particular article 21.” (para. 18)</p> <p>5. “Taking into account the changes occurring in the institution of the “extended family”, which provided children with an environment in which to discuss their problems, the Committee suggests that complementary initiatives be encouraged, such as youth peer counselling groups in schools, community-awareness programmes on youth problems, such as alcohol and suicide, and parental education programmes.” (para. 34)</p>
Tuvalu	<p>CRC/C/TUV/CO/2-5 (2020):</p> <p>1. “More efforts should be made to reach out to children living on outer islands and to sensitize the public, particularly parents and traditional and community leaders, on the principles and provisions of the Convention with a view to changing any misconception thereof. “ (para. 20)</p> <p>2. “... The Committee also recommends that the State party develop guidelines, including procedures and criteria, to determine the best interests of the child and disseminate these to the public, including traditional and religious leaders and all relevant public authorities. ...” (para. 26)</p> <p>3. “.... [T]he Committee remains concerned that traditional customs appear to be contrary to the principle of respect for the views of the child. Children under the age of 18 years are prohibited from participating in Falekaupule meetings, where decisions are made with regard to education, health and other important matters affecting them.” (para. 27)</p> <p>4. “ In view of its general comment No. 12 (2009) on the right of the child to be heard, the Committee recommends that the State party ensure that traditional customs are not regarded as barriers to the full participation of children in family, community, school and social life; ... ; and raise awareness of the public, particularly traditional and religious leaders, parents, teachers, judges and professionals working with and for children.” (para. 28)</p>	<p>CRC/C/TUV//CO/1 (2013) (Videoconference)</p> <p>1. “Strengthen awareness raising programmes...and ensure that children, parents, island communities, traditional, religious and community leaders and civil society play a key role in such initiatives....” (para. 14a)</p> <p>2. “The Committee is concerned about: The prevalence of discriminatory provisions in the State party’s legislation despite the Committee’s previous recommendations (CRC/C/TUV/CO/1, para. 24), in particular the Tuvalu Lands Code 1962 and the Native Lands Act 1956, which discriminate against women and girls in relation to land inheritance rights and child custody, as well as the Penal Code 1965, which criminalizes consensual sexual activity between boys....” (para. 16a)</p> <p>3. “With regard to its general comment No. 12(2009) on the right of the child to be heard, the Committee recalls its previous concluding observations ... and recommends that the State party: (a) Ensure that children’s views are not disregarded because of</p>

	<p>5. “The Committee is deeply concerned that section 29 of the Constitution stipulates that the exercise of human rights might be restricted if it is deemed divisive, unsettling or offensive to the people or threatens the values and culture of Tuvalu, and that the State party has enacted the Religious Organisations Restriction Act 2010, which results in the placement of restrictions on the freedom of religion, leaving the registration of religious organizations to the discretion of island Falekaupule.” (para. 31)</p> <p>6. “The Committee is concerned that no formal procedures exist to govern the separation of a child from the care of extended family in situations of abuse by family members.... ” (para. 43)</p> <p>7. “The Committee is concerned that the Tuvalu Lands Code permits the annulment of an adoption based on a child’s behaviour, does not consider the best interests of the child and gives preference to paternal custody. It is also concerned that adoption occurs privately within the family, and that there is no monitoring mechanism to follow up on adoptions.” (para. 45)</p> <p>8. “The Committee recommends that the State party:</p> <p>9. Revise the provisions for the annulment of adoption in the Tuvalu Lands Code to uphold the best interests of the child;</p> <p>10. Conduct a study on the nature and extent of the practice of customary adoptions by family members.... ” (para. 46a-b)</p>	<p>traditional customs, but rather given due consideration in all matters affecting them, including those relating to education and health.” (para. 21a)</p> <p>4. “The Committee recalls its previous recommendations (CRC/C/TUV/CO/1, para. 32) and recommends that the State party use the ongoing constitutional review process to consider revising section 29 (4) of its Constitution, under which children’s exercise of their rights may be restricted if it is deemed divisive, unsettling or offensive to the people, or threatens the values and culture of Tuvalu.” (para. 24)</p> <p>5. “The Committee is concerned about the absence of effective child protection mechanisms to protect children deprived of a family environment who are placed in the care of the extended family, including in cases of abuse or neglect. It also notes with concern the absence of formal alternative care arrangements.” (para. 34)</p> <p>6. “[T]he Committee recalls its previous recommendations (CRC/C/TUV/CO/1, para. 46) and recommends that the State party: ... Conduct a study on the modalities and extent of the practices of customary adoptions by family members and inform the Committee about its findings in the next periodic report.” (para. 36c)</p>
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Annex H – Air Distances Comparison

Distances noted below are as the bird flies and are based on a return trip. For the Committee members their actual home station was taken as their starting point and the figures below are the average of the distances from their respective home stations.

Travellers	Number	Geneva distance / person (km)	Geneva total distance (km)	Samoa Distance / person (km)	Samoa Total air distance (km)
Committee Members	13	10,909 (average)	141,817	28,675 (average)	372,775
OHCHR Staff	4	0	0	32,786	131,144
Cook Islands Delegation	9	33,886	304,975	3,056	27,504
FSM Delegation	4	27,068	108,272	8,068	32,272
Tuvalu Delegation	8	31,516	252,128	2,682	21,456
Total			807,192		585,151

Annex I – CRC84 Cost Breakdown

<i>Travel, accommodation the venue and Daily Subsistence Allowances for the Committee members and four OHCHR staff</i>		
Cost Item	Details	Total Cost (USD)
Venue Hire & Accommodation	The hire of the venue included the use of the main conference room and two breakout rooms for the duration of CRC84, accommodation for all 13 members, 4 OHCHR staff, 4 interpreters, 1 technician and 2 RRRT support team members. A conference package was also included which provided morning and afternoon tea for 30 people and a buffet lunch for 60 people.	\$37,878
Travel	Semi flexible return business class flights for all Committee members and four OHCHR staff.	\$161,919
DSAs	DSAs were provided to all Committee members at SPC rate, with deductions made for meals and accommodation provided.	\$14,791
Total		\$214,588

<i>Interpretation Costs</i>		
Cost Item	Details	Total Cost
Interpretation equipment hire and freight	Hire of headsets and return freight New Caledonia to Samoa	\$4,829
Professional fees and travel	4 x Interpreter and 1 technician	\$49,515
Additional equipment	Sounds booths, table microphones and sound system	\$5,777
Total		\$60,121

<i>Side events and external missions</i>		
Cost Item	Details	Total Cost
Marquée hire	Marquée hire (capacity 150 persons), tables, chairs, floor fans and flooring	\$6,540
Decorations		\$2,000
Return flights to Fiji and Vanuatu		\$4,000

Accommodation	Accommodation, meeting venues and refreshments	\$2,500
Total		\$15,040

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