



The rights of child victims and witnesses brought to a whole new level

The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child is calling on countries to implement the *Guidelines on Justice in Matters Involving Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime*, adopted in 2005 by the UN based on guidelines drafted by the International Bureau of Children's Rights (IBCR).

Since January 2006, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child is inviting State Parties to the *Convention of the Rights of the Child* (CRC) and its Optional Protocols, to bring their legislation and procedure in line with the *Guidelines on Justice in Matters Involving Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime*. This is a new and important step in promoting and protecting the rights of child victims and witnesses; it also demonstrates how the work of IBCR is having an impact at the highest level.

Millions of children throughout the world have suffered traumas as a result of crime and abuse of power. They may be victims of abuse within their family, trafficked for commercial sexual exploitation or maimed in a failed suicide bombing. They may experience additional hardship and danger as a result of their cooperation with authorities as victims and witnesses in standard systems of justice; or they may require support as they take part in some form of community justice process. Because of their age and vulnerability, these children require special protection.

Based on basic principles such as dignity, non-discrimination, participation and the best interest of the child, the Guidelines provide a practical framework to assist and guide professionals working with child victims and witnesses of crime in their day-to-day practice and to assist in the design, review and implementation of laws, procedures, and practices.

The Guidelines were finalized by IBCR in 2003 and adopted, after minor modifications, by the United Nations Economic and Social Council in July 2005 (ECOSOC Res. 2005/20). In addition to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child in Geneva, IBCR is working closely with the UN Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in Vienna, and with UNICEF in New York City, to assist governments and professionals who seek to implement the Guidelines.

Created in 1994 and based in Montreal, Canada, the International Bureau for Children's Rights (IBCR) is an international non-governmental organisation (INGO) with consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). The mission of IBCR is to contribute to the promotion and protection of children's rights in conformity with the CRC and its Optional Protocols.