



**University  
of Victoria**

## **UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA MEDIA RELEASE**

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# **Lack of compliance on children's rights spurs new approach in monitoring, accountability**

Children around the world stand to benefit from a new monitoring and reporting platform being developed by the University of Victoria to improve Canada's and other countries' ability to comply with the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

Globally, 196 countries are signatories to the 1989 convention to assure the best possible and most equitable use of government resources to uphold the economic, social, health and cultural rights of the child. They are required to regularly report on their progress with the CRC, but compliance is an issue.

GlobalChild will provide an accessible and systematic reporting structure designed to help identify strengths and weaknesses in government policies and processes that impact children.

"Despite Canada's important role in the development and promotion of the CRC, it is consistently falling short in compliance and reporting," says Ziba Vaghri, the lead investigator and an expert on child development in UVic's School of Public Health and Social Policy. "This project will help align Canada's internal processes with our international obligations by creating an accountability tool."

Vaghri leads an international team recently awarded more than \$1.1 million by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research for the five-year project. Vaghri is also supported by a five-year scholar award from the Michael Smith Foundation for Health Research.

GlobalChild will be developed in close collaboration with the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, which receives, reviews and advises on the CRC reports from the signatories. The project's team includes seven Canadian and four international universities as well as other prominent Canadian and international institutions.

Problems in reporting include skipped reports, lack of compliance with the reporting guidelines, and gaps in data, all of which make it difficult for the UN committee to recommend improvements.

GlobalChild will be a systematic method to gather data and generate comprehensive, consistent reports on policies, programs and outcomes based on sets of indicators. It will be piloted in BC, in an Indigenous community elsewhere in Canada, and in one francophone region of the country. Once developed, the electronic user-friendly platform will be available for use by other signatories to the CRC.

"Compliance to the CRC involves institutional, social, political and technical issues," says Yanghee Lee, former chair of the CRC and a co-investigator on the project from Sungkyunkwan University in Korea. "GlobalChild can be an important tool for countries which are parties to the CRC. It will provide an efficient inventory of capacities in support of children's rights and to generate better data."

One of the project's major objectives is to adapt, in collaboration with Indigenous scholars and advocates, the indicators of GlobalChild for Indigenous children and develop I-GlobalChild, focused on the rights of Indigenous children of Canada who are among the most vulnerable children in the country with disproportionately high health and welfare problems.

Being launched at a time of new optimism around Indigenous affairs in Canada, GlobalChild is an important contribution for change, says Margo Greenwood, academic leader of the National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health and a co-investigator from the University of Northern BC.

“Indigenous children remain significantly underserved by health care services while at the same time being at greater risk than other Canadian children for health problems. This project is an important opportunity for change that will contribute to the optimal well-being of our Indigenous children and families.”

GlobalChild is being officially launched in the lead-up to the International Congress for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect being held Aug. 28 to 30 in Calgary and supported by the government of Alberta. More than 1,500 child rights experts from around the world are expected to attend the conference, which was last held in Canada more than 30 years ago.

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