

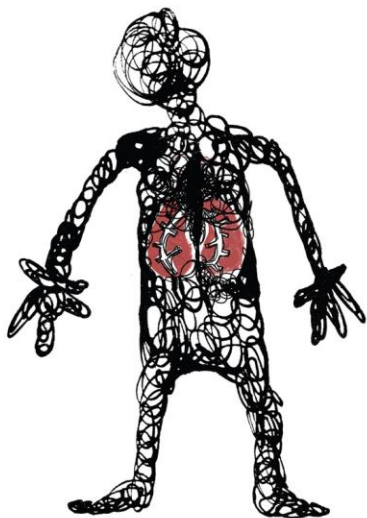


# Pesticide pollution and children's rights



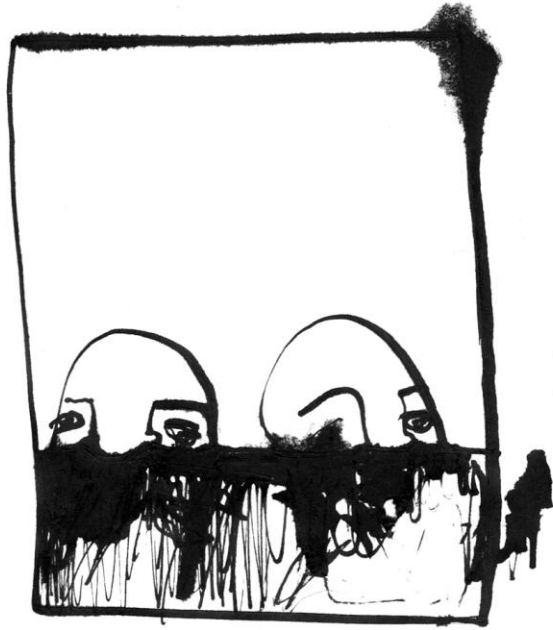
Suzanne Astic - Child Rights International  
Network (CRIN)

Illustrations by Miriam Sugranyes, CRIN



## Why are children more vulnerable and impacted by pesticides exposure?

- **Developmental vulnerability:** children's organs and nervous systems are still in development, both during the prenatal and after-birth stages.
- **Exceeding intake:** They may be exposed to more pesticides, with higher intake than adults, as they for instance **breath more often per minute**. Children consume more food and water relative to their weight, absorb toxics more readily, and are less able to excrete them afterwards.
- **Behavioral habits:** Children play on the ground, in watercourses, exploring the world through touch and taste. **Children are also less able to evaluate risks.**
- **Sensitive areas:** several testing campaigns and scientific studies indicate the **recurrent presence of pesticides in public areas**, such as playgrounds and public parks.



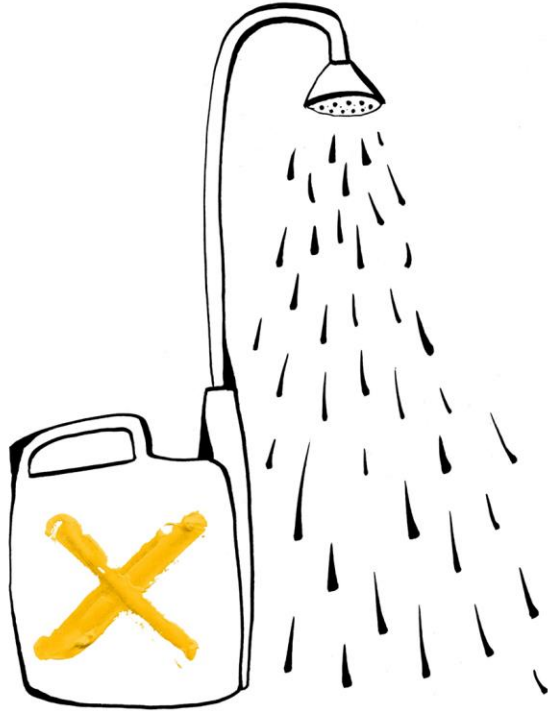
## International recognition of the impacts of pesticides on children and foetus

➤ Joint report 2017 on pesticides: Special Rapporteur on the right to food and SR on toxics and human rights (A/HRC/34/48)

- “Children are most vulnerable to pesticide contamination”: higher dose per unit of body weight
- “Exposure to **even low levels of pesticides**, for example through wind drift or residues on food, may be very damaging to children’s health”
- “**Pregnant women** who are exposed to pesticides are at higher risk of miscarriage, pre-term delivery and birth defect”

➤ 2016 Report of the Special Rapporteur on toxics and human rights on the theme of children’s rights (A/HRC/33/41)

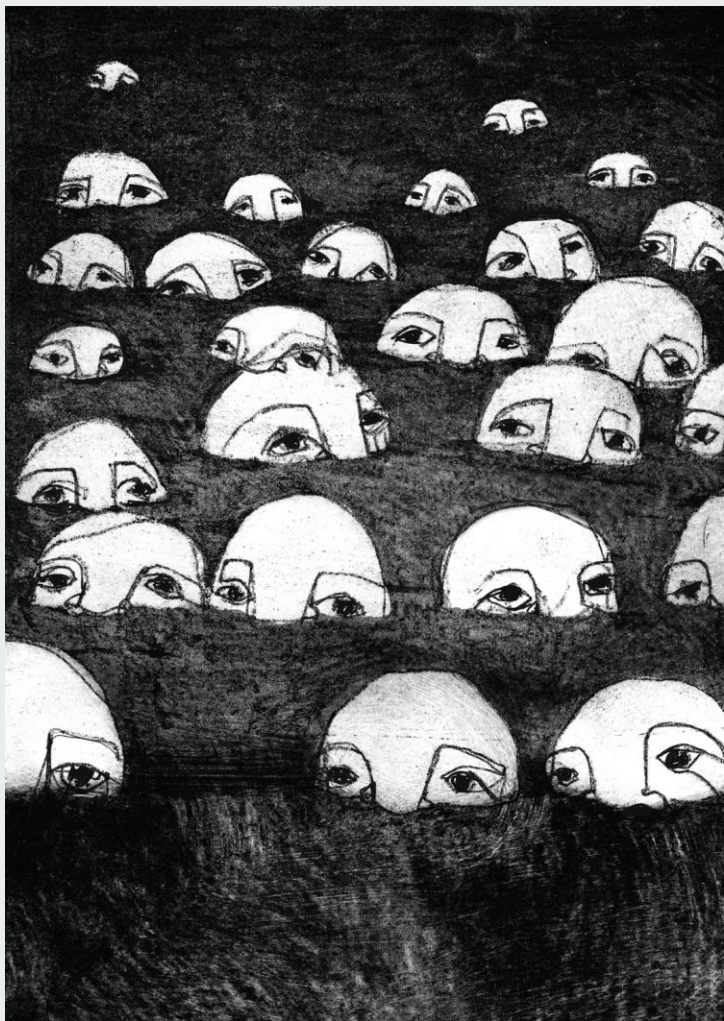
- Exposure starts **before birth** through the mother’s own exposure: “**pre-polluted**” children
- “**silent pandemic**”
- Impacts can be irreversible and can even be **passed down** from one generation to the next



## Children's rights affected by exposure to pesticides

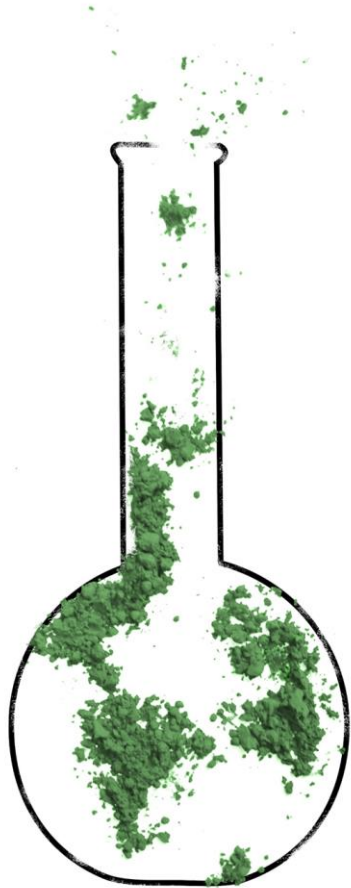
### ➤ UN Convention on the rights of the child

- Rights to **life**, to “the **highest attainable standard of health**” and to develop as persons “to the maximum extent possible”, right to **education**, to recreation and **play**, right to **information**
- Right to **physical integrity**: “non-consensual physical or mental intrusion against the body constitutes a human rights violation”
- Children’s **right to be heard**: States should “prevent childhood exposure, in recognition of the right of **present and future generations** to be heard”
- **Obligation of States to prioritize the best interests of the child** when designing environmental and public health norms, and ensure access to information and effective remedies.



## Children's rights affected by exposure to pesticides

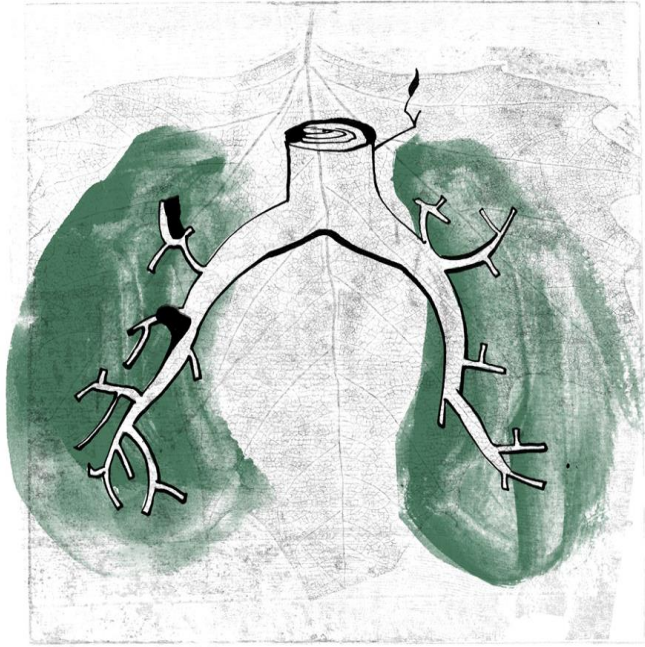
- 2020 Report of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (A/HRC/43/30)
  - States must **prevent childhood toxic exposure** to protect children's rights to life, survival, development, health and bodily integrity.
- 2020 Human Rights Council Resolution on "the realisation of the rights of the child through a healthy environment" (A/HRC/45/30)
  - Urges States to ensure the right of the child to the enjoyment of the **highest attainable standard of physical and mental health**, by inter alia: (...) Identifying and **eliminating sources of exposure** of children to (...) substances of high concern, such **endocrine disrupting chemicals**.
- 2022 UN General Assembly Resolution on "The human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment" ( A/76/L.75)
  - Calls on States and businesses to **scale up efforts to ensure a healthy environment for all**.
  - Unsound management of chemicals **interferes with the**



## European children's rights framework

### ➤ Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union

- The Charter was introduced by the Treaty of Lisbon, it **binds all EU Member states, with the same legal value as the EU Treaties.**
- Article 24 guarantees and protects the **rights and best interest of the child**, including the right to protection and care, as well as to express views. In all actions relating to children, whether taken by public authorities or private institutions, **the child's best interests must be a primary consideration.**
- Article 2 guarantees the **right to life**, and Article 37 prescribes **environmental protection.**



## European children's rights framework

- **EU Strategy on the rights of the child 2021-2024**
  - Rights based strategy: an instrument for **mainstreaming a children's rights perspective in all relevant policies, legislation and funding programmes.**
  - 2<sup>nd</sup> thematic area of EU actions aims to fight poverty, promote inclusive and child-friendly societies, health and education systems. **All children have a right to a good standard of living.**
  - EU aims to protect children's right to be heard in EU policies, considering **children as agents of change**, the Commission wants to support them in contributing to changes. **No policy regarding children should be designed without their voices.**



**More resources available at:**

**<https://home.crin.org/issues/toxics>**

**Art exhibition available at:**

**<https://home.crin.org/projects/environment-and-toxics>**

**Contact details: [suzanne@crin.org](mailto:suzanne@crin.org)**

**CRIN** CHILD  
RIGHTS  
INTERNATIONAL  
NETWORK