**Objective**
To identify and clarify key elements of the normative and legal framework governing countries' obligations to provide access to opioids for pediatric palliative care in order to inform civil society advocacy for improved access.

**Background**
- 98% of children in need of palliative care at the end of life live in low and middle-income countries.
- Estimated annual unmet global need for palliative care in children: 15-20 million
- Opioids are an essential component of a palliative care strategy: They are needed for the relief of severe pain and other symptoms.
- Approximately 80% of the world’s people live in countries with low to inadequate access to essential opioid medicines such as morphine.
- The right to the highest attainable standard of health includes the right to palliative care and pain relief, including access to opioids.

**Methodology**
1. A literature search was performed to identify the multi-lateral treaties that reference
   - universal rights
   - availability of medicines for pain control
   - childrens' rights
   - family health
2. A review of the identified treaties, conventions and declarations was performed. Language was analyzed and results were consolidated.
3. A diagram showing how these treaties affect and impact relations among countries, member states, multilateral organizations, civil society, providers and patients in relation to access to opioids was designed.

**Results**
Six different sources of International Law supporting access to opioids for paediatric palliative care were identified (including some of the relevant language found in each):

1. **Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948** affirms: dignity of individual and family
2. **Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, 1961/1972** recognizes: that "the medical use of narcotic drugs continues to be indispensable for the relief of pain and suffering and that adequate provision must be made to ensure the availability of narcotic drugs for such purposes."
3. **Covenant on Economic, Social & Cultural Rights 1948** affirms states' parties obligations to provide the highest attainable standard of health
4. **Convention Against Torture 1975** affirms: the right to be free from cruel, degrading and inhuman treatment
5. **Convention on Rights of the Child 1989** recognizes "the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness […] States Parties shall strive to ensure that no child is deprived of his or her right of access to such health care services.

**References & Links**
- **Convention Against Torture**: http://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CAT.aspx

**Conclusion**
Civil society organisations promoting paediatric palliative care must hold governments accountable for the treaty obligations that require them to provide palliative care and essential pain medication to children living in their countries.

**Key for chart**
- CND: Commission on Narcotic Drugs
- ECOSOC: Economic and Social Council
- ECSEM: Expert Committee on Selection and Use of Essential Medicines
- ECD: Expert Committee on Drug Dependence
- IAHPC: International Association for Hospice and Palliative Care
- WHO: World Health Organisation

**International Advocacy Organisations**
- **International Children’s Palliative Care Network**: www.icpcn.org
- **International Association for Hospice and Palliative Care**: www.hospicecare.com
- **Worldwide Hospice & Palliative Care Alliance**: www.thewpca.org