



© UNICEF/NYHQ2002-0568/Pirozzi

CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

UNICEF is the world's leading effective development and emergency relief organisation working globally to support children. UNICEF is not funded by the UN. We rely on voluntary donations for our work with children in over 150 developing countries.

Australian Committee for UNICEF Limited
ABN 35 060 581 437
Level 7, 171 Clarence Street
Sydney NSW 2000
PO Box 488
Queen Victoria Building NSW 1230
Tel: +61 2 9261 2811
Fax: +61 2 9261 2844
Email: unicef@unicef.org.au
www.unicef.org.au

UNICEF Australia has some fun ways for Australian children to learn about child rights.
To learn more visit: www.unicef.org.au,
contact UNICEF Australia's Education team on
+61 9261 2811 or email unicef@unicef.org.au

Did you know that UNICEF stands for the United Nations Children's Fund? UNICEF's mission is to make sure that the rights of children all over the world are protected and that people under the age of 18 are given special care and protection. We draw attention to the duties of governments, families, communities and individuals to respect those rights and support them in doing so.

UNICEF and the CRC

What are the key principles and provisions of the CRC?

The CRC consists of 54 articles and is guided by four fundamental principles.

- **Non-discrimination:** Children should neither benefit or suffer because of their race, colour, gender, language, religion, national, social or ethnic origin, or because of any political or other opinion; because of their caste, property or birth status; or because they are disabled.
- **The best interests of the child:** Laws and actions affecting children should put their best interests first and benefit them in the best possible way.
- **Survival, development and protection:** The authorities in each country must protect children and help ensure their full development — physically, spiritually, morally and socially.
- **Participation:** Children have a right to have their say in decisions that affect them and to have their opinions taken into account.



© UNICEF/NYHQ2000-0638/LeMoyne

Why do children need a special convention?

A special convention for children was needed because people under the age of 18 need special care and protection that adults don't necessarily need. Governments are responsible for making these rights available for everyone, and making sure that all parents and children know about and understand the convention.



© UNICEF/NYHQ2009-0178/Pirozzi

These fundamental human rights belong to each and every one of us equally, no matter who you are, where you live, what you believe in or how old you are. Children's rights are laid out and protected by a special agreement that was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989 and subsequently signed by almost every country in the world. This agreement is called the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). By signing this convention countries have agreed to uphold these rights.

Everyone has rights - certain things we should all be able to enjoy, such as the right to freedom of expression, protection, culture and play, education and health care.

THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Rights in Australia

Australia ratified the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in January 1991. This means that since then our government has had to make sure that every child has every right in the convention. The government has to regularly report to a panel of independent experts to tell them about the progress they've made towards making sure that children's rights are being met.



© UNICEF/NYHQ2005-1323/Tkhostova

Whose responsibility?

Everybody has rights. This means that everybody, including children, should respect the rights of others.

The following are some suggestions by UNICEF Australia of the responsibilities that could accompany the rights of the CRC.

- If every child has rights, then they also have a responsibility to respect the rights of others, including other children and their parents.
- If all children have a right to be protected from conflict, cruelty, exploitation and neglect, then they also have the responsibility not to bully or harm other children.
- If all children have the right to a clean environment, then they also have a responsibility to help look after their environment.
- If all children have a right to be educated, then they should learn as much as they are able to and, if possible, share their knowledge with others.
- If all children have a right to a full life, then they should also help ensure that the needy, the disadvantaged and victims of discrimination also enjoy this right.



A SIMPLIFIED VERSION OF THE UNITED NATIONS CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD.



- Article 1** Everyone under 18 years of age has all the rights in this Convention.
- Article 2** The Convention applies to everyone whatever their race, religion, abilities, whatever they think or say, whatever type of family they come from.
- Article 3** All organisations concerned with children should work towards what is best for each child.
- Article 4** Governments should make these rights available to children.
- Article 5** Governments should respect the rights and responsibilities of families to guide their children so that, as they grow up, they learn to use their rights properly.
- Article 6** Children have the right to live a full life. Governments should ensure that children survive and develop healthily.
- Article 7** Children have the right to a legally registered name and nationality. Children also have the right to know their parents and, as far as possible, to be cared for by them.
- Article 8** Governments should respect a child's right to a name, a nationality and family ties.
- Article 9** Children should not be separated from their parents unless it is for their own good. For example, if a parent is mistreating or neglecting a child. Children whose parents have separated have the right to stay in contact with both parents, unless this might harm the child.
- Article 10** Families who live in different countries should be allowed to move between those countries so that parents and children can stay in contact, or get back together as a family.
- Article 11** Governments should take steps to stop children being taken out of their own country illegally.
- Article 12** Children have the right to say what they think should happen when adults are making decisions that affect them and to have their opinions taken into account.
- Article 13** Children have the right to get and to share information, as long as the information is not damaging to them or to others.
- Article 14** Children have the right to think and believe what they want and to practise their religion, as long as they are not stopping other people from enjoying their rights. Parents should guide children on these matters.
- Article 15** Children have the right to meet with other children and young people and to join groups and organisations, as long as this does not stop other people from enjoying their rights.

- Article 16** Children have the right to privacy. The law should protect them from attacks against their way of life, their good name, their family and their home.
- Article 17** Children have the right to reliable information from the media. Mass media such as television, radio and newspapers should provide information that children can understand and should not promote materials that could harm children.
- Article 18** Both parents share responsibility for bringing up their children and should always consider what is best for each child. Governments should help parents by providing services to support them, especially if both parents work.
- Article 19** Governments should ensure that children are properly cared for and protect them from violence, abuse and neglect by their parents, or anyone else who looks after them.
- Article 20** Children who cannot be looked after by their own family must be looked after properly by people who respect their religion, culture and language.
- Article 21** When children are adopted the first concern must be what is best for them. The same rules should apply whether children are adopted in the country of their birth or if they are taken to live in another country.
- Article 22** Children who come into a country as refugees should have the same rights as children who are born in that country.
- Article 23** Children who have any kind of disability should receive special care and support so that they can live a full and independent life.
- Article 24** Children have the right to good quality health care, clean water, nutritious food and a clean environment so that they will stay healthy. Richer countries should help poorer countries achieve this.
- Article 25** Children who are looked after by their local authority rather than their parents should have their situation reviewed regularly.
- Article 26** The Government should provide extra money for the children of families in need.
- Article 27** Children have the right to a standard of living that is good enough to meet their physical and mental needs. The government should help families who cannot afford to provide this.
- Article 28** Children have the right to an education. Discipline in schools should respect children's human dignity. Primary education should be free. Wealthier countries should help poorer countries achieve this.

- Article 29** Education should develop each child's personality and talents to the full. It should encourage children to respect their parents, their cultures and other cultures.
- Article 30** Children have the right to learn and use the language and customs of their families, whether or not these are shared by the majority of the people in the country where they live, as long as this does not harm others.
- Article 31** Children have the right to relax, play and to join in a wide range of leisure activities.
- Article 32** Governments should protect children from work that is dangerous or that might harm their health or education.
- Article 33** Governments should provide ways of protecting children from dangerous drugs.
- Article 34** Governments should protect children from sexual abuse.
- Article 35** Governments should make sure that children are not abducted or sold.
- Article 36** Children should be protected from any activities that could harm their development.
- Article 37** Children who break the law should not be treated cruelly. They should not be put in a prison with adults and should be able to keep in contact with their family.
- Article 38** Governments should not allow children under 15 to join the army. Children in war zones should receive special protection.
- Article 39** Children who have been neglected or abused should receive special help to restore their self-respect.
- Article 40** Children who are accused of breaking the law should receive legal help. Prison sentences for children should only be used for the most serious offences.
- Article 41** If the laws of a particular country protects children better than the articles of the Convention, then those laws should override the Convention.
- Article 42** Governments should make the Convention known to all parents and children.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child has 54 articles in all. Articles 43-54 are about how adults and governments should work together to make sure that all children get all their rights.

Go to www.unicef.org/crc to read all the articles.



unicef 