

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

In 1989, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This is because childhood is a time when we need special care and help. These rights encourage everybody to do all they can to build a fairer, safer and happier world for all children where their rights are respected by everyone.

Article 1

Everyone under the age of 18 has all the rights in the Convention.

Article 2

The Convention applies to everyone: whatever their race, religion or abilities, whatever they think or say, whatever type of family they come from.

Article 3

The best interests of the child must be a top priority in all things that affect children.

Article 4

Governments must do all they can to make sure every child can enjoy their rights.

Article 5

Governments must respect the rights and responsibilities of parents and carers to direct and guide their children as they grow up, so that they can enjoy their rights properly.

Article 6

Every child has the right to life. Governments must do all they can to make sure that children survive and develop to their full potential.

Article 7

Every child has the right to a legal name and nationality, as well as the right to know and, as far as possible, to be cared for by their parents.

Article 8

Governments must respect every child's right to a name, a nationality and family ties.

Article 9

Children must not be separated from their parents unless it is in their best interests (for example, if a parent is hurting a child). Children whose parents have separated have the right to stay in contact with both parents, unless this might hurt the child.

Article 10

Governments must act quickly and sympathetically if a child or their parents want to live together in the same country. If a child's parents live apart in different countries, the child has the right to visit both of them.

Article 11

Governments must do everything they can to stop children being taken out of their own country illegally or being prevented from returning.

Article 12

Every child has the right to have a say in all matters affecting them, and to have their views taken seriously.

Article 13

Every child must be free to say what they think and to seek and receive all kinds of information, as long as it is within the law.

Article 14

Every child has 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. Governments must respect the rights of parents to give their children information about this right.

Article 15

Every child has the right to meet with other children and to join groups and organisations, as long as this does not stop other people enjoying their rights.

Article 16

Every child has the right to privacy. The law should protect the child's private, family and home life.

Article 17

Every child has the right to reliable information from the media. This should be information that children can understand. Governments must help protect children from materials that could harm them.

Article 18

Both parents share responsibility for bringing up their child and should always consider what is best for the child. Governments must support parents by giving them the help they need, especially if the child's parents work.

Article 19

Governments must do all they can to ensure that children are protected from all forms of violence, abuse, neglect and bad treatment by their parents or anyone else who looks after them.

Article 20

If a child cannot be looked after by their family, governments must make sure that they are looked after properly by people who respect the child's religion, culture and language.

Article 21

If a child is adopted, the first concern must be what is best for the child. All children must be protected and kept safe, whether they are adopted in the country where they were born or in another country.

Article 22

If a child is a refugee or is seeking refuge, governments must make sure that they have the same rights as any other child.

Article 23

Governments must help in trying to reunite child refugees with their parents.

Article 24

A child with a disability has the right to live a full and decent life with dignity and independence, and to play an active part in the community. Governments must do all they can to provide support to disabled children.

Article 25

Every child has the right to the best possible health. Governments must work to provide good quality health care, clean water, nutritious food and a clean environment so that children can stay healthy. Richer countries must help poorer countries achieve this.

Article 26

If a child lives away from home (in care, hospital or in prison, for example), they have the right to a regular check of their treatment and the way they are cared for.

Article 27

Governments must provide extra money for the children of families in need.

Article 28

Every child has the right to a standard of living that is good enough to meet their physical, social and mental needs. Governments must help families who cannot afford to provide this.

Article 29

Every child has the right to an education. Primary education must be free. Secondary education must be available for every child. Discipline in schools must respect children's dignity. Richer countries must help poorer countries achieve this.

Article 30

Education must develop every child's personality, talents and abilities to the full. It must encourage the child's respect for human rights, as well as respect for their parents, their own and other cultures, and the environment.

Article 31

Every child has the right to learn and use the language, customs and religion of their family, regardless of whether these are shared by the majority of the people in the country where they live.

Article 32

Every child has the right to relax, play and take part in a wide range of cultural and artistic activities.

Article 33

Governments must protect children from work that is dangerous or might harm their health or education.

Article 34

Governments must protect children from the use of illegal drugs.

Article 35

Governments must protect children from sexual abuse and exploitation.

Article 36

Governments must ensure that children are not abducted or sold.

Article 37

Governments must protect children from all other forms of bad treatment.

Article 38

No child shall be tortured or suffer other cruel treatment or punishment. A child should be arrested or put in prison only as a last resort and then for the shortest possible time. Children must not be in a prison with adults. Children who are locked up must be able to keep in contact with their family.

Article 39

Governments must do everything they can to protect and care for children affected by war. Governments must not allow children under the age of 15 to take part in war or join the armed forces.

Article 40

Children neglected, abused, exploited, tortured or who are victims of war must receive special help to help them recover their health, dignity and self-respect.

Article 41

A child accused or guilty of breaking the law must be treated with dignity and respect. They have the right to help from a lawyer and a fair trial that takes account of their age or situation. The child's privacy must be respected at all times. If the laws of a particular country protect children better than the articles of the Convention, then those laws must stay in place.

Article 42

Governments should make the Convention known to children and adults.