

5.3 Rights and Responsibilities - The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Objectives

- This is a compulsory module with the objective of relating the students' own ideas on their rights to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- To allow students to vote on the rights that they think are the most relevant to them with a view to sharing this information with students from other countries

Output

- Identification of 5 most relevant rights as identified by the class.

Previous Preparation

- Students should have with them the colour coded rights they prepared in the last module.
- Either give students the summary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child or give them the internet URL.
<http://www.therightssite.org.uk/html/kyr.htm> Unicef Youth Voice
- Students should also have copies of the resource sheet on 'What is the Convention on the Rights of the Child'
- Ask them to look through it before this lesson to save time at the beginning of the module.

Introduction (25%)

Whole Group Introduction by teacher

Look at the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. The UN has 191 member states. The Vatican has not joined the UN.

Tell the students that 177 countries out of 192 countries in the world have ratified the Convention

i.e. their governments have agreed to implement its articles.

Some countries have opted out of certain articles e.g., the UK does not implement Article 22.

The fact that a country has ratified the Convention does not mean that the Government necessarily implements the Convention as it should.

Extension questions in case you have time

Has your country ratified the Convention?

Has it opted out of any of the Articles?

Why would your country do this?

Does it implement the Convention on the whole?

Development (25%)

Individual or Pair work

Ask the students to read the resource sheets and pick out one or two articles which they think is interesting or would like explained and make a note of the them so they can post it in a discussion forum later. Ask the students to suggest an article for class discussion, for example Article 14 -

“You have the right to think and believe what you want and to practice your religion, as long as you are not stopping other people from enjoying their rights. Parents should guide children on these matters.” Do they agree with this? Should children be able to decide for themselves what religion to follow, or should it be for parents to decide?

Conclusion (50%)

Whole Group

- Ask the class to each write the five rights which they think are most relevant to them on a piece of paper and place them in a basket.
- Count the votes and work out the five most relevant rights for the class and ensure that this is posted on the school web page on Gemin-i Plus.
- Students should post their own questions and discussion points from the class in the central forum.
- Summarise to the class the results of the discussions.

Teacher Evaluation:

Comments on the class:

Pupil specific comments:

Observation and evaluation of the class:

Resource Sheet: What is the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child?

The **United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child** is an international conventions setting out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of children. It is monitored by the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Most member nation states (countries) of the United Nations have ratified (agreed to) it, either partly or completely. The United Nations General Assembly agreed to adopt the Convention into international law on November 20, 1989; it came into force in September 1990, after the required number of nations ratified it. The Convention generally defines a child as any person under the age of 18 years.

The Convention acknowledges that every child has certain basic rights, including the right to life, their own **name and identity**, to be raised by their parents within a family or cultural grouping and have a relationship with both of their parents even if separated.

The Convention forces states to allow parents to exercise their parental responsibilities. The Convention also recognises that the children have the right to express their own opinions and to have those opinions heard and acted upon when appropriate, to be protected from abuse or exploitation, to have their privacy protected and requires that their lives not be subject to excessive interference.

The Convention also obliges signatory states to provide separate legal representation for a child in any legal disagreement concerning their care and asks that the child's viewpoint be heard in such cases. The Convention forbids capital punishment for children.

The Convention is child-centric and places the child's needs and rights **first** – ahead of the parents or others. It requires that states act in the best interests of the child. This approach is different to the common law approach found in many countries that had previously treated children and wives as possessions ownership of which was often argued over in family disputes.

According to UNICEF, the Convention has been ratified by 191 countries. Only Somalia and the United States have not ratified the CRC. Somalia is currently unable to proceed to ratification as it has no recognized government. The United States, by signing the Convention, has shown its intention to ratify – but has yet to do so.

There are four guiding principles of the convention of the rights of the child:

- 1) **Non-Discrimination** (article 2) - no child should be injured, privileged or punished by, or deprived of, any right on the grounds of his or her

race, colour or gender; on the basis of his or her language or religion, or national, social or ethnic origin; on the grounds of any political or other opinion; on the basis of caste, property or birth status; or on the basis of a disability. This principle implies therefore that all children -- girls and boys, rich and poor, living in urban and rural areas, belonging to minority or indigenous groups -- should be given the opportunity to enjoy the rights recognized by the Convention.

- 2) **Best Interests of the Child** (article 3) - Best interests of the child means the best interests of the child will be a primary consideration in all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies. When authorities intervene -- for example, when establishing traffic regulations or designating safe places for children to walk and play -- actions should be on behalf of children and should protect their best interests.
- 3) **Survival and Development** (article 6) - States must protect life and must not carry out any actions that intentionally take life away. These include measures to increase life expectancy and to lower infant and child mortality, as well as prohibitions on the death penalty and executions. States' actions should promote a life of human dignity -- that is, States should fully ensure the right to an adequate standard of living, including the right to housing, nutrition and the highest attainable standards of health. The 'survival and development' principle is not limited to a physical perspective it also emphasises the need to ensure full and harmonious development of the child, including at the spiritual, moral and social levels, where education will play a key role.
- 4) **Participation** (article 12) - The principle affirms that children are full-fledged persons who have the right to express their views in all matters affecting them and requires that those views be heard and given due weight in accordance with the child's age and maturity. It recognizes the potential of children to enrich decision-making processes, to share perspectives and to participate as citizens and actors of change. The Convention envisages a changed relationship between adults and children. Parents, teachers, caregivers and others interacting with children are seen no longer as mere providers, protectors or advocates, but also as negotiators and facilitators. Adults are therefore expected to create spaces and promote processes designed to enable and empower children to express views, to be consulted and to influence decisions.

<i>Article Number</i>	<i>Right</i>
1	Everyone under 18 years of age has all the rights in this Convention.
2	The Convention applies to everyone whatever their race, religion, abilities, whatever they think or say, whatever type of family they come from.
3	All organisations concerned with children should work towards what is best for you.
4	Governments should make these rights available to you.
5	Governments should respect the rights and responsibilities of families to direct and guide their children so that, as they grow, they learn to use their rights properly.
6	You have the right to life. Governments should ensure that children survive and develop healthily.
7	You have the right to a legally registered name and nationality. Also the right to know and, as far as possible, to be cared for by your parents.
8	Governments should respect children's right to a name, a nationality and family ties.
9	You should not be separated from your parents unless it is for your own good - for example, if a parent is mistreating or neglecting you. If your parents have separated, you have the right to stay in contact with both parents, unless this might harm you.
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.
11	Governments should take steps to stop children being taken out of their own country illegally.
12	You have the right to say what you think should happen when adults are making decisions that affect you, and to have your opinions taken into account.
13	You have the right to get, and to share, information as long as the information is not damaging to yourself or others.
14	You have the right to think and believe what you want and to practise your religion, as long as you are not stopping other people from enjoying their rights. Parents should guide children on these matters.
15	You 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.
16	You have the right to privacy. The law should protect you from attacks against your way of life, your good name, your family and your home.
17	You have the right to reliable information from the mass media. Television, radio, and newspapers should provide information that you can understand, and should not promote materials that could harm you.
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.
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.
20	If you cannot be looked after by your own family, you must be looked after properly, by people who respect your religion, culture and language.
21	If you are adopted, the first concern must be what is best for you. The same rules should apply whether the adoption takes place in the country where you were born or if you are taken to live in another country.
22	If you are a child who has come into a country as a refugee, you should have the same rights as children born in that country.

<i>Article Number</i>	<i>Right</i>
23	If you have a disability, you should receive special care and support so that you can live a full and independent life.
24	You have the right to good quality health care and to clean water, nutritious food and a clean environment so that you can stay healthy. Rich countries should help poorer countries achieve this.
25	If you are looked after by your local authority rather than your parents, you should have your situation reviewed regularly.
26	The government should provide extra money for the children of families in need.
27	You have a right to a standard of living that is good enough to meet your physical and mental needs. The government should help families who cannot afford to provide this.
28	You have a right to an education. Discipline in schools should respect children's human dignity. Primary education should be free. Wealthy countries should help poorer countries achieve this.
29	Education should develop your personality and talents to the full. It should encourage you to respect your parents, your own and other cultures.
30	You have a right to learn and use the language and customs of your family whether or not these are shared by the majority of the people in the country where you live.
31	You have a right to relax and play and to join in a wide range of activities.
32	The government should protect you from work that is dangerous or might harm your health or education.
33	The government should provide ways of protecting you from dangerous drugs.
34	The government should protect you from sexual abuse.
35	The government should make sure that you are not abducted or sold.
36	You should be protected from any activities that could harm your development.
37	If you break the law, you should not be treated cruelly. You should not be put in a prison with adults and you should be able to keep in contact with your family.
38	Governments should not allow children under 16 to join the army. In war zones, you should receive special protection.
39	If you have been neglected or abused, you should receive special help to restore your self-respect.
40	If you are accused of breaking the law, you should receive legal help. Prison sentences for children should only be used for the most serious offences.
41	If the laws of a particular country protect you better than the articles of the Convention, then those laws should stay.
42	The government should make the Convention known to all parents and children.

Articles 43-45 are about how adults and governments should work together to make sure all children get their rights.