

# Child Rights

## INTRODUCTION

This lesson plan provides an opportunity to learn about child rights and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. There are practical examples of some basic rights and activities that help students understand the topic of rights.

### What are Child Rights?

Child rights are the human rights of all people aged up to 18. Human rights are the basic standards people need in order to live a meaningful life. These basic standards include shelter, access to clean water and sanitation, as well as access to basic health care and education.

Your ability to go to school is the realisation of your right to education. Though sometimes you may not enjoy school, there are millions of children around the world who are denied their right to education.

Child rights also include things such as the right to be involved in community life, and the right to be heard. These rights are often denied in some countries.

### What is the Convention on the Rights of the Child?

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is a document that helps people learn about and fight for children's rights. It is quite long, with 54 articles (sections) in all, and was passed by the United Nations General Assembly in November 1989. It has been signed by all but two countries and has been a part of international law for 15 years.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child means that children have the means by which to learn about their rights, but it is also a helpful tool for teaching adults in a community about child rights, and how they can help children to realise and defend their rights. Parents, family members and other caregivers are some of the people closest to children who have this responsibility.

Millions of teenagers in the developing world must grow up fast and take on roles and responsibilities that can be difficult for Australians to imagine. Sometimes these roles and responsibilities impact of their rights.

### Who has rights?

Everyone has rights. It doesn't matter where you live, what language you speak, whether you are a boy or a girl, how much money your parents earn, or what religion you follow, you all have the same basic rights.

Although everyone is born with the same basic rights, people's access to these rights is often denied to them by where they were born, their social circumstances, political decisions and more. The Convention on the Rights of the Child is designed to help children in such circumstances learn about and fight for their rights.

Many of us in Australia take our rights for granted, especially if our rights have never been threatened or abused. We are surrounded by privileges like computers, Xboxes and ipods. But there may be some children in your classroom that have not been so lucky. Understanding our rights and entitlements gives us a stronger sense of who we are, and helps young people speak up and ask for help when their rights are being violated.

### What does the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child say?

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child spells out the basic human rights of children everywhere. It is the best tool that we have internationally for telling people how to treat children. Child rights as defined by the Convention are often put into four categories: Survival, Development, Protection and Participation. These categories are used to raise awareness about child rights and make them easier to remember.

Here are some brief explanations about what the different categories mean.

#### Survival

**Article 6:** Children have the right to live. Governments should ensure that children survive and develop healthily.

**Article 24:** Children have the right to good quality health care, safe drinking water, nutritious food, a clean and safe environment, and information to help them be safe and healthy. Rich countries should help poorer countries achieve this.

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## Curriculum Domain

Civics & Citizenship  
Communication  
Thinking processes

## Learning Outcomes

Understand the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child  
Understand why rights matter in the fight against poverty

A child's first right is to survival. Every child has the right to live. Access to safe water, sanitation and medical services are important for the health of all people, and especially in making sure that children survive and develop into healthy adults.

## Development

**Article 28:** *Children have the right to have access to education.*

Children have the right to develop to their fullest potential. This means having an adequate standard of living, including the right to housing, education, nutrition, healthcare, leisure, religion and freedom of thought.

Education is one of the keys to development. It creates choices and opportunities for people, and gives children a stronger voice in society. According to a 2005 UNICEF report, there were 121 million school-aged children who were still not in school.

## Protection

**Article 2:** *Children are entitled to protection without discrimination.*

**Article 19:** *Children are to be protected from neglect and abuse.*

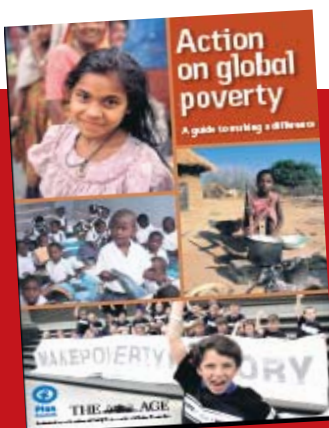
**Articles 35 and 36:** *Children have the right to be protected or prevented from abduction, sale or trafficking and all other forms of exploitation.*

Children have the right to protection from any threat to their wellbeing. This means protection from sexual, physical and emotional abuse from family and caregivers right through to people who would seek to exploit children in the workplace, or kidnap and traffick (sell) children for personal gain or profit.

It's hard to get an exact number, but UNICEF estimates that each year 1.2 million children are trafficked – this means being sold to be used for slave labour or to be abused.

Many children in poor communities are not registered when they are born, leaving them with no official identity. As a result, they can sometimes miss out on some of their rights and opportunities.

Plan is committed to protecting children, and has invested heavily in promoting and campaigning for universal birth registration. Birth registration gives children an official identity, and helps governments to factor them into planning and budgeting for services like education and health. Plan also prioritises child protection strategies, particularly at times of emergency or crisis when children are very vulnerable.



***Action on Global Poverty – A guide to making a difference*** has been designed as an accessible, interesting action guide for students and interested community members and groups. For students in schools, the resource provides a range of valuable activities for Levels 4 – 6 of the VELS and is an excellent source of information and discussion for VCE Geography and International Politics. Teachers notes also available.

Order online at [www.plan.org.au](http://www.plan.org.au), or call 13 PLAN (13 7526).

## Who is Plan?

Plan is one of the world's largest community development organisations that has worked for over 65 years to help end child poverty. Plan works in over 45 developing countries and all Plan's work is based on a child centred community development approach.

## What is Child Centred Community Development?

Child centred community development is a rights-based approach in which children are active and leading participants in the community development process.

## Participation

**Article 12:** *If children are capable of forming their own views they also have the right to express these views and have them heard.*

**Article 31:** *Children have the right to take part in leisure, recreation and cultural activities.*

Children's right to participate covers a range of activities, from the right to participate fully in the family home, including decision making, through to the right to form or join groups, to express concerns and be a part of decision making processes within their communities and governments, to campaign for their rights, and to take action on issues of concern to them.

Participation means more than just taking part. It means being active and involved. Children's participation in development means recognising and valuing the involvement of children and helping them to have a voice and influence the direction of their lives, their communities and the world.

## CLASSROOM ACTIVITY

### Talk it up

Are there children in Australia who are being denied their rights? How should we respond?

### Surf's up

As a class look at David Salter's version of the Convention on the Rights of the Child at [www.hri.ca/children/youth/writeon/david/](http://www.hri.ca/children/youth/writeon/david/) and choose some topics/ rights that students believe are the most important to them. This works well if every student does the activity based on a different Article of the Convention. With these as headings, students can illustrate or make a collage of images to demonstrate those rights in action and each 'Right' can be placed around the room. Take a look at <http://www.unicef.org/uk/youthvoice/pdfs/uncrc.pdf>