



Summary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)



Preamble: The Preamble reaffirms the basic principles espoused in the Charter of the United Nations and human rights provisions articulated in relevant UN Declarations and Covenants. It recognizes that children, due to their vulnerability, are in need of special care and protection in order to develop to their fullest potential. The CRC recognizes the family as “the fundamental group of society” and calls on governments to respect and protect the family and its subsequent child-rearing responsibilities.

Article 1 (Definition of the Child): The Convention defines a 'child' as a person below age 18, unless the laws of a particular country set a younger age limit.

Article 2 (Non-discrimination): The Convention applies to all children, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, culture, religion, family status, or ability. Governments are responsible for ensuring children are protected from any form of discrimination.

Article 3 (Best interests of the Child): With regard to decisions that affect a child, his/her best interests should be taken into consideration. This provision extends to legal and administrative decisions. When parents, elected officials, and other adults make decisions, they should think about what impact their choices and actions will have on children.

Article 4 (Implementation of Rights): Governments are responsible for translating the Convention’s provisions into action.

Article 5 (Parental Guidance): Governments should respect the rights and responsibilities of parents, families, and guardians to care for their children. These adults should help children learn about their rights, including how to use them in an appropriate manner. The Convention does not weaken or threaten parental authority; rather, the CRC entrusts Governments to ensure that those engaged in child-rearing responsibilities can fulfill their roles.

Article 6 (Survival and Development): Children have the right to live. Governments are responsible for making sure every child grows up healthy.

Article 7 (Name and Nationality): All children have the right to have a name, nationality, and, when possible, to know and be cared for by their parents.

Article 8 (Preservation of Identity): Children have the right to an identity- an official record of who they are; thus, the birth of a child should be recorded and registered with the Government as soon as possible.

Article 9 (Separation from Parents): Children have the right to live with their parent(s) unless this is not in their best interests. Children who do not live with their parents or whose parents are separated or divorced have the right to remain in contact with both parents unless this is not in their best interests.

Article 10 (Family Reunification): Parents and children who live in different countries should be allowed to move between those countries in order to remain in contact with one another and possibly reunite as a family.

Article 11 (Kidnapping): This article pertains to children being abducted by their own parents. Governments should have legal measures in place to prevent children from being taken out of their own country illegally.

Article 12 (Freedom of Opinion): Children have the right to form and express an opinion. Adults, when making decisions that affect children, should take into account children’s opinions. The Convention does not weaken or threaten a parent’s ability to make decisions for their children nor does it give children the right to tell their parents what to do.

Article 13 (Freedom of Information): Children have the right to request, search for, and share information, provided that the information is not harmful to them or others.

Article 14 (Freedom of Thought, Conscience and Religion): Children are free to think, develop a belief system, and practice their religion so long as their partaking in these freedoms does not infringe upon the rights of others. Governments should respect the rights of parents, families, and guardians to provide direction to their children on these matters.

Article 15 (Freedom of Association): Children have the right to gather together and join groups, provided that their activities do not threaten public safety or impose upon the rights of others.

Article 16 (Right to Privacy): Children have the right to privacy. Governments should enact and implement laws that protect children from attacks on their privacy, reputation, family, home, and way of life.

Article 17 (Access to Information): Children have the right to access information that enhances their overall well-being. Governments should support mass media efforts to create and disseminate information that is beneficial to children. Sources of this information include radio and television programs, books and newspapers, and child/youth-appropriate Web sites. Information should be composed in child-friendly language and provided in multi-linguistic formats.

Article 18 (Parental Responsibility): Both parents share responsibility for raising their children. Governments should help parents fulfill their responsibility by ensuring they have access to support services, such as child care facilities.

Article 19 (Protection from Child Maltreatment): Governments should make sure that children are appropriately cared for and are not being physically, psychologically, or sexually abused or neglected by their parents or other caregivers. As such, Governments should establish agencies/organizations to identify, investigate, and record incidents of abuse and neglect. With regard to disciplinary measures, the CRC does not stipulate what forms of punishment parents should employ. However, punishment should not inflict violence upon a child.

Article 20 (Protection for Children without Families): Governments should provide appropriate, alternative care for children who cannot be looked after by their own families. Examples include guardianship, kinship care, foster placement, and adoption. It is within the best interest of children to be looked after by people who respect their ethnic, religious, cultural, and linguistic background.

Article 21 (Adoption): Children have the right to a family. However, certain circumstances prevent a child from living with their families, such as children who have been orphaned or whose families are unable to care for them. In these instances, children may be eligible for adoption. Children should only be adopted if it is within their best interest.

Article 22 (Refugee Children): Children who have been forced to leave their homes and seek refuge in another country have the same rights as children born in that country. Governments should make sure these children are protected and receive humanitarian assistance.

Article 23 (Children with Disabilities): Children with disabilities, such as physical, emotional, cognitive, or developmental impairments, are entitled to all the rights prescribed in this Convention. Governments should ensure that these children receive the care and support they need in order to lead full, independent lives.

Article 24 (Health): Children have the right to quality health care, including access to safe and clean water, nutritious food, an environment free of pollutants and other hazards, and educational programs that help children to remain healthy. Wealthy countries should assist developing countries in providing health-related services to children.

Article 25 (Periodic Review of Placement): Children in alternative care have the right to have all aspects of their placement reviewed on a regular basis. This should be done in order to ensure these children are receiving the best possible care.

Article 26 (Social Security): Governments should provide social assistance to children (and their families) living in poverty. Examples of support include school lunch programs, housing assistance, and Medicaid.

Article 27 (Standard of Living): Children have the right to a standard of living that fosters their physical, emotional, social, moral, and spiritual development. Governments should provide assistance to parents, families, and guardians who have difficulty in providing for their children's needs.

Article 28: (Right to Education): Governments should provide children with free, compulsory primary education and increase children's ability to access secondary and higher education. Wealthy countries should help children in poor countries attain this right. Governments should ensure that school disciplinary practices do not violate a child's dignity. School administrators, teachers, and other staff members should not punish children by subjecting them to physical or emotional abuse and neglect.

Article 29 (Goals of Education): Governments should ensure that a child's education allows him/her to develop to his/her fullest potential. Whether children receive an education in a school setting or are home-schooled, they should be taught to respect the values of their own culture as well as those of others.

Article 30 (Children of Minority and Indigenous Groups): Children belonging to minority or indigenous groups have the right to learn about and participate in their cultural customs and traditions, practice their religions, and speak in their native languages. These rights should not be infringed upon by members of majority racial, ethnic, or cultural groups.

Article 31 (Leisure and Recreation): Children have the right to relax, play, and participate in a variety of age-appropriate cultural, artistic, and recreational activities.

Article 32 (Child Labor): Governments should protect children from engaging in work that is dangerous, inhibits their ability to obtain an education, or jeopardizes their health and overall development. Governments are responsible for setting a minimum age limit for employment, regulating the hours and conditions of employment, and establishing and enforcing sanctions against those who violate such provisions.

Article 33 (Drug Abuse): Governments should undertake all measures necessary to protect children from the unlawful use of narcotic and psychotropic drugs. Governments are also responsible for safeguarding children from becoming involved in drug production and trafficking operations.

Article 34 (Sexual Exploitation): Governments should employ all measures necessary to protect children from all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse, including prostitution and involvement in pornography. This provision is augmented by the 2000 Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography.

Article 35 (Abduction, Sale and Trafficking): Governments should execute all measures necessary to protect children from being abducted, sold or trafficked. This provision is augmented by the 2000 Optional Protocol to the CRC on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution, and Child Pornography.

Article 36 (Other Forms of Exploitation): Governments should ensure children are safeguarded from being exploited or subjected to any activities which threaten or harm their well-being.

Article 37 (Punishment and Detention): Children cannot be arrested, detained, or imprisoned without warrant. Governments should ensure that children who violate the law are not tortured or subjected to other inhumane forms of punishment. Children should not be housed with adult inmates. They have the right to remain in contact with their families, the right to an attorney, and the right to appeal their stay in prison.

Article 38 (Armed Conflict): Governments should undertake all measures necessary to protect and care for children affected by war. This includes putting in place safeguards which prevent children under the age of 15 from being recruited or coerced into active combat. This provision is augmented by the Optional Protocol to the CRC on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict which specifies that children under age 18 cannot be recruited for nor take part in active combat.

Article 39 (Rehabilitative Care): Governments should provide physical care and psychological treatment services to children who have been victimized by abuse, neglect, or exploitation. These services are essential to restoring the dignity, health, and self-respect of the child.

Article 40 (Juvenile Justice): Children accused of committing a crime have the right to due process of the law. This includes the right to be presumed innocent until proven guilty, the right to legal assistance, the right to a trial, and freedom from being compelled to testify or enter a guilty plea. Governments are responsible for establishing the minimum age for which children can be punished for the crimes they commit. Prison sentences should only be imposed if a child is convicted of a most serious offense.

Article 41 (Respect for the Highest Standards): If the laws of a particular country offer better protection to children compared to the standards put forth in the Convention, then these laws should remain in effect.

Article 42 (Knowledge of Rights): Governments are responsible for informing children and adults about the CRC.

Articles 43-54 (Implementation Measures): These articles relate to how Governments and NGOs should work together to implement the CRC and ensure that the rights of all children are protected and promoted.