

A' Adam's Bairns?

Background Information

Unit 3 Forced Movement of People > Refugees and Asylum Seekers > Welcome

The History of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child

The history of children being accorded their own set of international human rights dates back to the 1920s when Eglantyne Jebb founded the charity Save the Children at the end of the First World War. Jebb drafted what was to become the 1924 Declaration of the Rights of the Child, also known as the Geneva Declaration, that contained 5 rights.

After the horrors of World War II, the newly established United Nations (UN) focused on the rights of children from an early stage and on 20 November 1959 the Declaration of the Rights of the Child was adopted, expanding on the Geneva Declaration. The 1959 Declaration accorded children 10 rights. This 1959 Declaration was to become the foundation for the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) adopted by the UN General Assembly 30 years later. The move from a declaration to a convention meant that governments which signed up were now obliged to uphold them.

The UNCRC was created in 1989 and added participation rights to the existing provision and protection rights. It is an international treaty that seeks to protect the welfare and development of children. It applies to all children from birth to 18. Children do not have to 'earn' rights through behaving in a particular way and they are not linked to responsibilities. Adults are duty-bearers: they fulfil a responsibility to ensure rights are met by the rights-holders. Children are rights-holders: they are enabled and empowered to hold duty-bearers to account.

The articles of the UNCRC ensure that children are protected, have the opportunity to participate and are provided for – these are known as the '3 Ps': Participation, Protection and Provision.

The Articles in the UNCRC

The UNCRC has 54 articles that cover all aspects of a child's life and set out the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights that all children are entitled to. It also explains how adults and governments must work together to make sure all children can enjoy all their rights with adults as duty-bearers, and children as rights-holders.

There are four articles in the Convention that are seen as special. They're known as the "General Principles" and they help to interpret all the other articles and play a fundamental role in realising all the rights in the Convention for all children. They are:

- Non-discrimination (Article 2)
- Best interests of the child (Article 3)

- Right to life, survival and development (Article 6)
- Right to be heard (Article 12)

Further Reading

<https://www.unicef.org.uk/what-we-do/un-convention-child-rights/>.

A Summary of the Articles in the UNCRC: https://www.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/10/UNCRC_summary-1_1.pdf