

# Children's Rights


*A child without courage is like a sky without stars.*

<b>Themes</b>	Children, General human rights, Education
<b>Complexity</b>	Level 2
<b>Group size</b>	Any
<b>Time</b>	60 minutes
<b>Overview</b>	<p>This activity uses diamond ranking to promote discussion about the Convention on the Rights of the Child (the CRC), including the issues of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Fundamental human rights and the special rights of the child under the CRC</li> <li>▪ Duties and responsibilities under the Convention</li> <li>▪ How to claim the rights</li> </ul>
<b>Related rights</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ The right to know and live with one's family</li> <li>▪ The right to protection from economic exploitation</li> <li>▪ The right to special treatment in court proceedings</li> </ul>
<b>Objectives</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To provide knowledge about the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)</li> <li>▪ To develop skills to review information critically and relate it to everyday experience</li> <li>▪ To stimulate feelings of responsibility, solidarity, justice and equality</li> </ul>
<b>Materials</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Statement cards - one set per small group</li> <li>▪ A large sheet of paper to make a wall chart</li> <li>▪ Markers</li> <li>▪ Enough space for small groups to work independently</li> </ul>
<b>Preparation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Refer to the abridged version of the CRC on page 406. List the Articles on the large sheet of paper to make a wall chart.</li> <li>▪ Review the statement cards provided below and refer to the CRC. Decide which Articles will promote the most interesting discussion with your particular group. Consider which issues are most relevant to the group members and also which will be the most controversial.</li> <li>▪ Prepare one set of cards for each small group. Put each set in an envelope so that they don't get mixed up!</li> </ul>


## Instructions

1. Start with a brief review of the CRC. Ask what people know about it. Point out the wall chart and go over the main Articles.
2. Ask participants to get into small groups of three to four people. Hand out the envelopes with the statement cards.
3. Explain the diamond ranking procedure. Each small group is to discuss the nine


**THEMES**



CHILDREN




GEN. HUMAN RIGHTS




EDUCATION

**COMPLEXITY**




LEVEL 2

**GROUP SIZE**



ANY

**TIME**



60 MINUTES

statements and consider how relevant each one is to their own lives. They should then arrange them in a diamond pattern in order of importance. They should lay the most important statement on the table. Underneath it, they should lay, side by side, the two next most important statements. Underneath these, they should lay out the next three statements of moderate importance. The fourth row should have two cards and the fifth row one card, the statement that they thought was the least important. In this way the cards will lie in the shape of a diamond.

4. Give the groups 25 minutes to discuss and decide the order of ranking.
5. When all the small groups have finished, let people walk around the room to see how each group ranked the statements. Then call everyone into plenary for a debriefing.

### **Debriefing and evaluation**

Start by inviting each group in turn to present the results of their discussions. Then go on to review how participants enjoyed the activity and what they learned.

- How do the results of the different groups' discussions compare? What are the similarities and differences?
- Why do different people have different priorities?
- As a result of listening to others, do any of the groups wish to reconsider their own decisions about the ranking of the cards? Which arguments were the most persuasive?
- In general, which rights are not respected in your community, and why?
- Are there any rights which are not in the Convention that you think should be included?
- Do you think that children need their own Convention? Why?
- If children have their own Convention, is there not a case for a Convention for young people aged 18 to 30?
- What special rights should such a convention for young people contain?
- It is one thing for children to have rights under the CRC, but, in reality, how realistic is it for them to claim them?
- How do people in general claim their rights?
- If participation in the democratic process is one way for people to claim their rights, what can the participants do now to begin to "claim their rights" at home and in their school or club?
- To whom, in your society, can children turn, if they know of serious violations of their rights?

### **Tips for facilitators**

There is more information about diamond ranking on page 49 of chapter I "How to use the manual". Point out to the groups that there are no right and wrong ways in which to order the cards. They should recognise that different people have different experiences and therefore different priorities, and these should be respected. Nonetheless, they should try, in each of their small groups, to come to a consensus about the order. After all, in real life, issues have to be prioritised and decisions made in the best interests of all!

## Variations

Instead of providing nine Articles to be ranked, you can provide eight and leave one card blank for the groups to identify the ninth themselves.

Put the statement cards in a hat and ask people in turn to take one out and to talk about it for one minute. Refer to the activity "Just a minute", on page 150, for information on this method. Ask the small groups to write a short story or to present a short role-play of an incident relating to selected Articles. Alternatively, the stories/role-plays could be based on events from the media: something heard or seen in a film or theatre, or read in a book or magazine. The role-plays can be developed so that participants start with the incident and go on to improvise solutions or ways to prevent the incident in particular, or the violation in general, from happening again.

## Suggestions for follow-up

Invite someone who is familiar with the CRC, a state attorney, the head of a child help-line, a child psychologist or someone from the ombudsman's office, to talk to the group. Before the talk, conduct a brainstorm of abuses of children's human rights, for example, child abuse, sexual exploitation, neglect and bullying. Find out from the speaker who in the local community has a duty of care and responsibility, for example, parents, police, help-lines, social workers, etc. Also, get advice on how to take action if they witness a violation, especially if it is something as serious as a neighbour maltreating their children. Such issues need to be tackled with care, concern and caution.

Children and young people often feel discriminated against. If the group would like to explore issues about discrimination, they may like to do the activity "All equal, all different", on page 88.

## Ideas for Action

Review the school's management, policies and curriculum to see how well the school meets its duties and responsibilities in relation to the CRC. For example, does it provide education that is directed to the development of the child's personality, talents and abilities, or is there too much emphasis on cramming for exams? Do pupils have the right to express views freely on all matters affecting them? Are the pupils' views given due weight? In other words, is there a school council and how effective is it? Is school discipline administered in a manner consistent with the child's dignity? How does the school deal with racist incidents and bullying? Discuss where there is room for improvement and what measures could and should be taken to address the issues. Look at the example on page 276 in "Taking action", and plan a project. Be careful not to rush into things or do things in ways that will (unnecessarily) upset the teachers, especially if they might resent you wresting power from them!

## Further information

For the full text of the Convention, relevant UNICEF documents, published annually, on the state of the world's children, and other books and publications relating to children's rights, see the references in chapter 5 in the section on background information on children (page 317).

## Key date

**20 November**

Universal Children's Day

**HANDOUTS**
**Statement cards**

Copy the following Articles and cut them out to make the statement cards.

The child has the right to express freely views on all matters affecting him/her, and the child's views should be given due weight.  
The child has the right to freedom of expression.

The right of the child to freedom of thought, conscience and religion shall be respected. The child has the right to freedom of association and peaceful assembly.

No child shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his/her privacy, family, home or correspondence. The child should be protected from unlawful attacks on his/her honour and reputation.

Parents have the prime responsibility for the upbringing and development of the child.

The child has the right to education. The State shall make primary education compulsory and available and free to all. School discipline shall be administered in a manner consistent with the child's dignity. Education should be directed towards the development of the child's personality, talents and abilities, towards the development of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, towards the development of a responsible life in a free society in the spirit of peace, friendship, understanding, tolerance and equality, and towards the development of respect for the natural environment.

The child has the right to rest and leisure, to play and participate freely in cultural life and the arts.

The child shall be protected from economic exploitation and from performing work that is hazardous to his/her life and development.  
The child shall be protected from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, the use of children in prostitution or other unlawful sexual practices, in pornographic performances and materials.

The State shall take all feasible measures to protect and care for children affected by armed conflict.

Every child accused of having committed an offence or crime should be guaranteed to be presumed innocent until proven guilty, to have legal assistance in the presenting of his/her case, not to be compelled to give testimony or to confess guilt, to have his/her privacy fully respected, and to be dealt with in a manner appropriate to his/her age, circumstances and well-being. Neither capital punishment nor life imprisonment without possibility of release shall be imposed for offences committed by children below the age of 18.