

## What are children's rights?

Rights are defined as that which the person is entitled to have, to do, or to receive from others and which is enforceable by law. Children's rights are set out in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) The UNCRC defines a child as a person below the age of 18 years, unless the relevant laws recognise an earlier age of majority.

The UNCRC makes clear that international human rights law recognises children as active citizens. Children's rights are aimed at safeguarding the inherent worth, dignity and full development of every child and are categorised as:

- Survival: essential for children to live and be healthy e.g. right to attainable standard of health; effective health services; adequate standard of living; social security and special care if he/she has disability
- Development: essential for children to reach their full potential e.g. right to education; information; development of personality; talents and mental and physical abilities; leisure; play; opportunity to participate in cultural and artistic activities; opportunity to enjoy his/her culture; and use his/her language
- Protection: essential so that children will not suffer from discrimination, abuse and exploitation e.g. right to special protection in emergency situations; protection from exploitation through child labour, drug abuse, sexual exploitation, sale, trafficking, abduction; protection from abuse and neglect by parents or caregivers; and cross national borders to be reunified with their children
- Participation: essential to enable children to express their opinions on matters that affect them e.g. right to name and nationality; freedom of expression; freedom of association; and privacy



## What is the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)?

The UNCRC was adopted and opened for signature, ratification and accession by the United Nations General Assembly of 20 November 1989. It is the most important global reference point for children's rights. The ratification of the UNCRC establishes the obligations and responsibilities of duty-bearers (parents, society and governments) to ensure rights-holders (children) can claim their rights. All governments except the USA and Somalia have signed on to the UNCRC.



The UNCRC does not undermine parental rights. It acknowledges that the family is the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of all its members and particularly children. It states that the family should be afforded necessary protection and assistance and recognises that the child - for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality - should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love and understanding.

## Why are children's rights important?

Children's rights are internationally and legally recognised standards on how children should be treated by adults, states and fellow children. Children's rights are recognition that children have equal status as adults and are equally entitled to enjoy the rights that are inherent to the human dignity of all people.

# In what ways are children's rights commonly threatened?

Children's rights are threatened whenever they do not have full opportunity to develop their potential. Children's rights are undermined when they experience deprivation, exclusion or vulnerability due to poverty, war, injustice, humanitarian emergencies or natural disasters; or where children are subject to abuse (physical, sexual, verbal, psychological), affected by HIV, orphaned, abandoned, made homeless or subject to stigma and discrimination.



## How does ChildFund incorporate a rights based approach?

The ChildFund program model affirms a 'rights-based approach' as a key principle in program planning and implementation. This means that development interventions should be more than just responding to the needs of a child and their community (although this is a very important part of upholding children's rights).

The ChildFund approach recognises that:

- Children are entitled to assistance
- Government have binding legal and moral obligations
- Children are active participants by right.
- All children have the same right to fulfil their potential
- There is an over arching rights framework to which all aid and development work contributes
- All adults and children can play a role in achieving children's rights

ChildFund recognises that poverty alleviation and the realisation of human rights are interdependent. Poverty represents a fundamental threat to the realisation of the basic rights of children and their communities. A lack of access to basic human rights such as adequate food, shelter, clean water, formal education, primary health

care, leisure and recreation, cultural activities, and information about these rights have a profound impact on people's development potential, particularly for children.

Specifically ChildFund's program work aims to:

- Educate all staff about children's rights
- Inform children, parents and other community members about children's rights
- Be inclusive of all children
- Support children's empowerment and recognise children's capacity to actively participate in community development
- Form strategic engagement with civil societies, government at local, regional and national levels to support their roles in promoting and protecting child's rights
- Collaborate with other organisations on advocacy initiatives
- Address discrimination due to gender, disability and other factors
- Adopt the DEV framework that helps analyse the factors that prevent children from realising their full potential

