

UN CONVENTION ON THE

RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

A booklet on the UN
Convention on the
Rights of the Child



This is the Ombudsman for Children's pamphlet about the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, adapted and translated for children who are fleeing.

Thomas Hammarberg has written the original text.
Lena Erika Falk at The Centre for Easy-to-Read has written the easy to read text.

You can download the pamphlet from the Ombudsman for Children's website:
www.barnombudsmannen.se

Barnombudsmannen
Box 22106
104 22 Stockholm
Telephone: 08-692 29 50

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All children are entitled to their own human rights

What do you know about the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child? Learn more about the rules designed to protect the rights of the child.

The rights in the Children's Rights Convention are applicable to *all* children in *all* countries. It does not matter if you were born in the country, have moved to there, or even if you have fled there as a refugee. You have the same rights.

You as a child have your own particular human rights. In Sweden, you are regarded as a child until your 18th birthday.

What it means is that you have a right to protection and care. Additionally, it means that you have the right to be heard on matters concerning you and your life.

The UNCRC says it is the government of each country must protect the child and to take responsibility to ensure that the child is able to realise their rights. The government that signs a Convention, by doing so promises to follow the rules of the Convention.

Many countries are poor. They do not have the money make sure that their children

Teddy bear or mustache
For child's rights - until
your 18th birthday,
you are protected by the
rights for children



really get their rights. But it says in the rules that they nevertheless should do whatever and everything they can.

Governments can also ask other countries for help. It says in the rules that countries must work together in cooperation with other countries on matters concerning child rights.

There are different kinds of human rights. There are several UN conventions on human rights.

One form of rights is that all people should have be able to express their opinion and be involved in associations with others.

Another form of rights is that people should get enough to eat and be able to learn to read and write.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child contains both types of rights. Both types of rights are equally important.

Almost all countries have signed on

The work of the Convention on the Rights of the Child began in 1979. By 1989, was the UNCRC was ready.

Since then, almost all countries of the world have signed the Convention. National governments have pledged to follow the rules in the UNCRC.

The UN has several different conventions concerning human rights. But no other convention has received so much support from countries of the world as the UNCRC has.

Why? This is due to several things.

More and more, people have read and seen on television how war, poverty and injustice causes suffering to children. Many associations have spoken to politicians and government decision-makers about the vulnerable children are in.

And over time, more and more politicians have understood the importance of children's rights.

Important rules

The various rules in the Convention on the Rights of the Child are called Articles. There are a total of 54 Articles.

All rules are equally important. But nevertheless there are a few Articles are more important, and to keep in mind.

The core principles are found in Articles 2, 3, 6 and 12.

When you read the other Articles, you should keep in mind what is contained in these Articles which form the guiding principles.

Article 2 deals with that the rules apply to all children.

All children are of equal worth. No child should be discriminated against, in other words be treated worse for no good reason.

It doesn't matter what the colour of the child's skin is, or his/her parents ethnicity, if the child is a girl or a boy, what language the child speaks, the religion the child believes in, if the child has a physical disability or impairment, or if the child is rich or poor.

Discrimination in school may also occur with bullying.



Article 3 deals with focusing on the best interests of the child. Politicians, governmental authorities and courts should always consider what is best for the child when they decide on matters related to children.

The Article states that the child's best interests shall be the primary consideration. This means that sometimes there are things that are more important than the child's best interests. But politicians must be able to show that they also have given due consideration to what is in the best interests of children.

Article 6 deals with that the child has a right to life and personal development.

The right to life means that States must ensure that children will not be killed. This can mean, for example, that children are not killed in war, and that children receive health care and medicines when they are sick so they do not die of diseases.

The right to personal development means that States will do what they can in order to ensure that the child has a good childhood.

Children need so many things to develop well. Growing up with a sense of security, love, sufficient food, healthcare, a home, and the chance to play and attend school; these are some but not all of what is required.

Article 12 deals with that the child has the right express their opinion on things that directly relate to them. Adults should listen to the child.

Governmental authorities including the courts should ask the child for their opinion, and listen to the child when they are making decisions concerning the child.

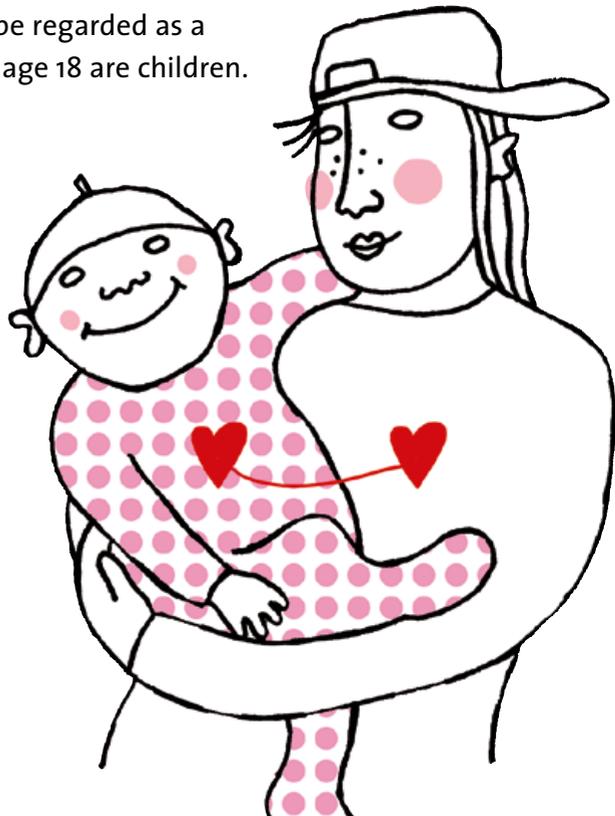
This may include that teachers in schools ask children what they think before the teacher decide things.

Public officials in a municipality should ask children what they think before they make decisions about things that directly affect children.

The other articles in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Article 1 defines who is to be regarded as a child. All individuals under age 18 are children.

Article 4 is about what countries should do in order to comply with the principles in the Convention. Countries should amend their laws so that the laws are good for children. States should do all they can to implement the children's rights. Rich countries must help poor countries.



Article 5 deals with that countries need to understand that it is the parents who have the primary responsibility for the child. Parents should assist so that their child is able to enjoy their rights.

Articles 7 and 8 deals with that all children have the right to know who he or she is.

The child has the right to a name and to be a citizen of a country. The child also has the right to know who his or her parents are.

Article 9 deals with that children should always, whenever possible, be with their parents.

If the parents' divorce, the child has the right to see both their mom and dad. But sometimes it's best for the child not to live with their parents or one of them.

And sometimes it is best for the child not to be with one of their parents (or even both of them). This may be because the child is suffering from physical abuse, or because their parents cannot take care of them.

Articles 10 and 11 are concerned with that children and parents have the right to visit with each other even if they live in different countries.

One parent may take the child with them if they move to another country, unless the other parent gives their consent. Countries must agree on how to help children and parents so that they can visit with each other.

Articles 13, 14 and 15 concerns that the child has the right to say what he or she thinks.

The child has the right to think freely, to follow the religion they believe in, and to be involved in various associations.

Article 16 deals with the child's right to privacy.

This may mean for example that parents should not read their children's letters and diaries. It is also concerned with that the child should be able to close a door and to be alone when they goes to the WC at school.

Article 17 deals with that the child has the right to read good books and magazines, and to get information in other ways, such as radio, television and via the Internet.

States should have laws that protect children from films and texts that can harm the child.

Article 18 deals with that it is the parents who together have the responsibility for the child.



Parents should always consider what is best for the child. Countries should make efforts to help the parents so that they can be better parents.

One good way to help the parents is to make sure that there are good preschool or daycare centres where children can stay when their parents are at work.

Article 19 deals with the protection of children from violence at home.

States must protect children against parents and other adults hitting the child, being cruel to the child, or in another manner poorly caring for the child.

This may relate to that the parents abuse alcohol or drugs, or that a parent exploits the child sexually.

Articles 20 and 21 deals with children who cannot stay at home with their family.

States must ensure that the child is able to live with another family. Usually the best situation is if the child can live with relatives. There are times when a child is adopted by a family in another country.

Governmental authorities and courts that determine where children should live should always keep the best interests of the child in mind.

Article 22 deals with children who are refugees. Countries pledge to provide protection and assistance to the children who come to the country for asylum.

This applies to both unaccompanied minors and children who come with their parents.

A separated child should be assisted in finding their parents. If they cannot find their parents or other relatives, the child

should receive the same protection and assistance as other children get when they cannot live with their parents.

Article 23 deals with children with a physical disability.

States must ensure that children with a physical impairment or other disability have the opportunity for a good life.

Provision must be made for children with disabilities to be able to attend school and participate in the community in general.

The child and the child's family are to receive the assistance they need. The help should be free of charge or cost so little so that people can afford to accept the help.

Working together, countries will learn more about how to help children with physical disabilities in a good way.

Rich countries must help poor countries.

Article 24 deals with the child's right to health care.

The countries pledge to do all they can to ensure that children receive good health.

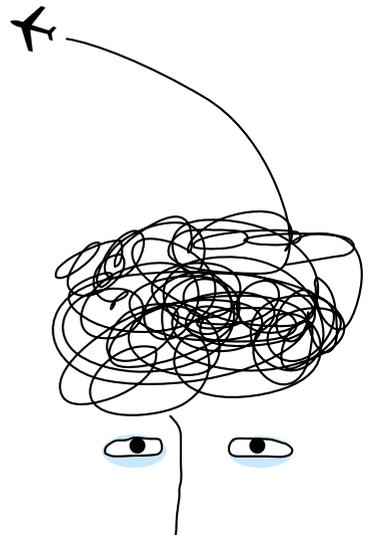
All children are entitled to receive care when they are sick.

Women who are pregnant and mothers with new-born babies are to receive decent care. Parents should learn how to feed and care for their children.

Rich countries must help poor countries.

Article 25 deals with children who are not living with their parents.

The governmental authority with the responsibility for the child must ensure that the child receives good care and treatment.



Articles 26 and 27 talks about the child's right to security. Families in need must receive help so that the child is well taken care of even if her or his parents are very poor, ill, or unemployed.

A parent who is not living with their child must also take responsibility for their child. This may mean paying so that the child has sufficient food, clothing and housing, and satisfies the other essential needs of the child.

Article 28 deals with the right of children to attend school and receive an education.

All children must attend primary school. There should not be any mandatory tuition fees. States must ensure that more children are able to attend upper secondary school and continue on to higher education.

Rich countries must help poor countries.

Article 29 deals with what the child should learn in school.

Every child should be allowed to develop as much as possible.

The child must be well prepared for life as an adult.

The child should learn about human rights, and that all people are of equal worth.

The child must also learn about the protection of nature.

Article 30 concerns children belonging to minority groups and/or indigenous peoples.

In Sweden, we have children who are Sámi, Finish-speaking Swedes, Tornedalians, Roma, and Jewish. Members of each group have the right to their language, their culture and their religion.

Article 31 deals with that children have the right to play, free-time and rest, and recreational activities.

Article 32 concerns protecting children against dangerous work.

Article 33 concerns protecting children against illegal drugs.

Article 34 deals with the protection of the child from an adult forcing them into sex or that the child is forced to sell themselves sexually.

Article 35 and 36 is about protecting the child from being taken advantage of in any other way.

It could be that someone is selling a child for the child to work in a factory. It may be that someone takes a child from his or her parents to sell the child to another family.

But this is also a protection against any other ways of exploiting or abusing children that anyone might think of.

Article 37 is about protecting the child against the death penalty, life imprisonment and torture.

Torture is when an individual is tormented for the purpose of gaining information from them or getting them to say something.

When there is a lawsuit against a child, the child has the right to get help from a lawyer, meaning a person with knowledge of the laws. Children who are in prison should not be treated poorly.

Children should not be in the same prison as adults. Children who are in prison should be able to receive visits from their family and correspond with their family.

Article 38 says that children should not be compulsorily recruited into the military as soldiers.

Article 39 deals with that countries have an obligation to help children who have been abused so that the child can feel good and live a normal life.

This also includes children who have been soldiers in a war.

Article 40 deals with children who are suspected of any crime. The countries pledge to treat the child well and to give the child a fair trial.

Article 41 concerns that countries are free to makes efforts over and above what is in the Convention, into order to ensure that child rights are protected.

Article 42 deals with that the countries pledge to ensure that both children and adults become aware of the rules contained in the UNCRC.

Articles 43–54 contains rules concerning what countries need to do in order to comply with the UNCRC.



UN Committee on the Rights of the Child

In the UN Palace of Nations in the city of Geneva in Switzerland, there is a group of people work to ensure that countries comply with the rules of the UNCRC.

This is the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child. States are required to periodically provide reports concerning the implementation of the Convention and the status of child rights in their country to the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Countries also promises that people in the country will have access to the reports in order to be able to discuss what is good and bad for the children of in the country.

There are eighteen people working in the Committee on the Rights of the Child. They come from a variety of countries and all of them are experts concerning children. The experts read the reports from the individual countries.

Sometimes there are multiple reports from the same country. Non-governmental associations working for the rights of the child can make their own reports on how children are doing in the country.

Then the Committee on the Rights of the Child holds a meeting. Some people who work for the government of the country being discussed attend.

They can answer questions about what they have done for children in general, and what they intend to do to make it better.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child is not a court. It cannot punish countries that fail to follow the rules of the Convention.

However the Committee on the Rights of the Child can provide suggestions on what countries can do to make it better. Sometimes, countries can get help from the UN or other countries.

The idea is that children should get their rights.

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child works in several complementary ways

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child can call a government of a country to a meeting at any time. This may occur if the UN learns about that children are being very poorly treated in a particular country.

Sometimes even a child has written a letter to the Committee on the Rights of the Child and discussed what is going on.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child can arrange special sessions to discuss particular problems.

There have been meetings about children in war, children who have exceptionally hazardous jobs, the rights of girls, and the rights of children who use wheelchairs or have other physical disabilities.

Several countries have begun to be more focused on children's rights

Of course, not all countries comply with the rules of the Children's Rights Convention.

Some countries disregard many rules. In some poor countries, kids have hazardous jobs. It is perhaps the case that girls

and children with a physical impairment are not able to attend school.

Most countries find it difficult to comply with all of the rules. Even Sweden has received criticism from the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

But public officials in many countries have started to think more about children's rights when they decide different things.

Several countries have recently adopted laws that try to make things better for children. In several countries, there are children's ombudsmen working to remind those in charge policy-making, to keep children's rights in mind.

In Sweden, there has been an Ombudsman for Children since 1993. Teachers and others who work with children learn about children's rights.

New associations have started working for the rights of the child. Aid agencies are thinking more about what is good for children as they help people in poor countries.

These things, countries have talked about in their reports to the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Rights of the child in the future

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child has been in existence since 1989. Almost all countries of the world have committed to follow the rules contained in the Convention. Most countries have submitted reports to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Now is the time to make sure that the kids of the world really get the rights enshrined in the Convention.

Therefore it is important that people know what rules are contained in the Convention. Then they can begin to discuss how to make it better for children in Sweden and in other countries throughout the world.



Places you can turn to if you have questions about your rights

The Swedish Migration Agency is the governmental authority which receives the applications from people who want to come to Sweden and will investigate whether they have sufficient reason for remaining here. They can answer questions about the asylum process.

Telephone: 0771-235 235 Monday–Friday, 08:00–16:00.

If you are calling from abroad: +46 7712-35235

Health and Social Care Inspectorate (IVO) is a governmental authority supervising that children and adolescents who do not live with their family are doing ok where they are placed. If things are not working out well in the accommodations where you are, or in contacts with the social services or medical care, you can talk to them about this.

Telephone: 020-120 06 06 Monday–Friday, 12:00–19:00.

The Swedish School Inspectorate is a governmental authority that works to ensure that all students get a good education in a secure environment. They can answer questions about your



right to an education. You can also file a complaint when something is not working as it should be in school.

Telephone: 08-527 332 00 Monday–Friday, 9.30–15:00.

Save the Children is a private organisation that supports children in vulnerable situations – In Sweden and in the world. They have offices for children and adolescents in Stockholm, Gothenburg, Malmö and Umeå.

Telephone: 08-698 90 00 Monday–Thursday, 8:30–17:00 and Friday 12:45–16:00.

Save the Children’s helpline for children who arrive in Sweden alone. You can call there about anything and you can remain anonymous. Counselors there speak Arabic, Dari and English. There is no charge for the call.

Telephone: 0200-77 88 20 every day from 15:00 to 18:00.

Swedish Refugee Advice Centre (SWEREF) is an organisation that provides free legal advice. They answer questions about asylum, family reunification, Swedish citizenship and Swedish immigration law.

Telephone: 0200-88 00 66 Monday–Wednesday, 9:00–11:00.



The Red Cross is an organisation that can provide advice in individual refugee matters and assist with searching for a missing family member. Best to have the help of an adult when contacting them.

Telephone: 020-41 50 00 Tuesday–Thursday, 9:30–12:00.

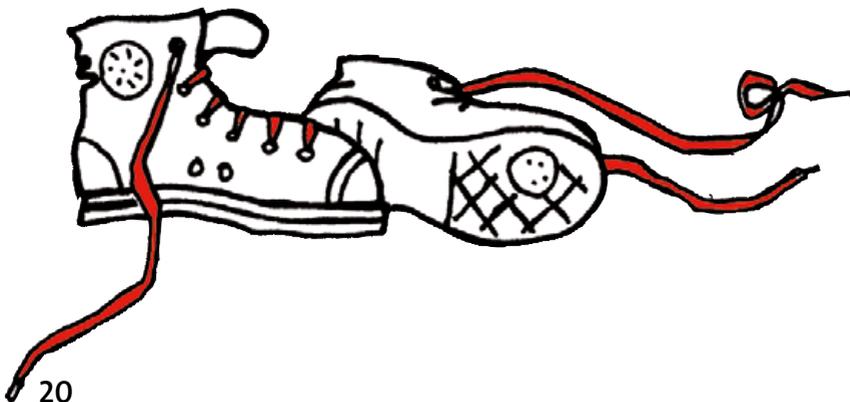
Bris – Children’s Rights in Society is a Swedish non-governmental organisation that provides support to vulnerable children and adolescents. Anyone under 18 can call and talk to a counselor if there is something that is bothering them or that they need help with. Callers remain anonymous, if they want. The call is free.

Telephone: 116 111 from Monday–Sunday, 14.00–21.00, Wednesdays, 17:00–21:00.

The Children’s Rights Agency is an organisation that provides individual children and young people in the Stockholm area, practical and legal assistance, support and counselling. Children and young people up to 21 years old are welcome to contact us with questions about their situation.

Telephone: 072-565 33 46 e-mail: elin@barnrattsbyran.se

Keep in mind that most offices close for lunch.



ABOUT THE OMBUDSMAN FOR CHILDREN IN SWEDEN

There are 2 million children and adolescents under 18 years old living in Sweden. Like everyone else in our society, their lives are impacted by the decisions of policy makers and civil servants.

In Sweden, all children and adolescents under 18 years old have an Ombudsman. The individual called the Children's Ombudsman is appointed by the government and is head of a government agency called the Ombudsman for Children.

There are 25 of us working at the Ombudsman for Children, all working on issues concerning the rights of children and adolescents. We investigate how the Children's Rights Convention is working out in the community, and inform people about it. The Ombudsman for Children makes recommendations concerning how laws and regulations in Sweden should be amended to conform to the UNCRC.

We at the Ombudsman for Children speak to children and adolescents in order to find out how they are doing and hear their opinions about different matters.