**CHILDREN'S RIGHTS AS A TOOL FOR SOCIAL CHANGE**

**SECTION OVERVIEW**

The objective of this first section of the 'Protect Project' toolkit is to develop knowledge and competency in key concepts of Children's Rights Education. It presents five session plans that cover areas related to Children's Rights education. Some of the session plans in the training toolkit are introduced with a brief summary of important information that will support the delivery of each session.

Some sessions require more extensive background reading, online links have been included directing the reader to certain resources.

This section's contents will support participants to:

* Understand the key concepts of Children's Rights.
* Develop essential competencies, skills and attitudes when working with Children's Rights Education in non-formal learning settings.
* Be able to plan and develop educational activities for Children's Rights training and events for specific target groups.

**Section contents:**

1. Overview and introduction to Children's Rights Education (pg. 2-4)
2. Session plan 1: Children's Rights - Defining what it means to be a child and to relate children's rights to children's needs (pg. 5-8)
3. Session plan 2: Introducing Children's Rights Education and its goals (pg. 9-10)
4. Session plan 3: A Children's Rights Tree - Defining Children's Rights and children needs and getting to know the *'Universal Declaration of Human Rights'* (pg. 11)
5. Session plan 4: Draw-the-Word game - Developing knowledge of the *'Convention on the Rights of the Child'* (pg. 12-13)
6. Session plan 5: Electioneering - Exploring rights and responsibilities connected to democracy and the right to participate in the democratic process (pg. 14-15)
7. Summary and References (pg. 16)

**OVERVIEW OF CHILDREN'S RIGHTS EDUCATION**

"*Educational programmes and activities that focus on promoting equality in human dignity, in conjunction with other programmes such as those promoting intercultural learning, participation and empowerment of children."* - Council of Europe's Youth Programme, definition of Children's Rights Education

Children's Rights Education (CRE) refers to all learning that builds children's rights knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours. It is a process of empowerment that begins with the individual and branches out to encompass the community at large.

The aim of Children's Rights Education is to develop an understanding of everyone's common responsibility to ensure Children's Rights are a reality in each community and in society. It contributes to the long-term prevention of Children's Rights abuses and more broadly, violent conflicts, through the promotion of equality and sustainable development; and the enhancement of participation in decision-making processes within a democratic system.

The United Nations plan of actions for the second phase (2010-2014) of the World Programme of Human Rights Education provides a more extensive definition of CRE that includes the different elements and provisions on CRE agreed upon by the international community.[[1]](#footnote-1)

**WHAT ARE CHILDREN'S RIGHTS?**

Children and young people have the same general human rights as adults. They also have specific rights that recognise their needs. The UNICEF Convention on the Rights of the Child[[2]](#footnote-2) sets out the rights that must be realised for children to develop their full potential.

The Convention offers a vision of the child as an individual and as a member of a family and community, with rights and responsibilities appropriate to their age and stage of development. The Convention recognises the fundamental human dignity of all children and the urgency of ensuring their wellbeing and development. It makes clear that the basic quality of life should the fundamental right of all children, rather than a privilege enjoyed by a few.

There are many reasons for individualising Children's Rights in a separate human rights Convention:

1. **Children are individuals**Children are neither the possession of parents or guardians, nor of the state. Nor are they simply 'people in the making,' they have equal status as members of the human family.
2. **Children start life as totally dependent beings**Children must rely on adults for the nurture and guidance they need to grow towards independence. Such nurture is ideally found from the adults in children's families but when primary adult caregivers cannot meet children's needs, it is up to the State, as the primary duty bearer, to find an alternative that is in the best interests of the child.
3. **The actions, or inactions, of Government impact children more than any other group in society**Nearly every area of Government policy - from education to public health - affects children to some degree. Short-sighted policymaking that fails to take children into account has a negative impact on the future of all members of society.
4. **Children's views should be heard and considered in the political process**Children generally do not vote and do not traditionally take part in the political process. Without special attention to the opinions of children - as expressed at home and in schools, local communities and even in Governments - children's views go unheard on many important issues that affect them presently, or will affect them in the future.
5. **Changes in society have a disproportionate and often negative impact on children**Transformation of the family structure, globalisation, climate changes, digitalisation, mass migration, shifting employment patterns and shrinking social welfare net in many countries all have strong impact on children. The impact of these changes can be particularly devastating in situations of armed, violent conflict and other national and global emergencies.
6. **The health development of children is crucial to the future wellbeing of any society**As children are developing, they are especially vulnerable - more so than adults - to environmental influences. Poor living conditions, poverty, inadequate health care and nutrition; safe drinking and bathing water, housing and pollution. The effects of disease, malnutrition and poverty threaten both the present and future of children and therefore the stability and wellbeing of the societies in which they live.
7. **The costs to society of failing children is huge**  
     
   Children's earliest experiences significantly influence their future development, stability and participation in society. The course of their development determines their contribution, or cost, to society over the course of their lives.

**NOTES ON EFFECTIVE SESSION DELIVERY**

* Each topic of this section has activities assigned.
* These sessions are designed to be accessible to a broad age-range of audiences.
* Reading the full 'Protect Project' report and preparing required materials before starting trainings and events will ensure sessions are more efficient.
* Read the session plans carefully and follow them step-by-step and make preparations accordingly.
* Try to be present in the place you will carry out activities in sessions plans, before the participants, children and youth workers.
* Place necessary objects in easily reachable and accessible places during sessions.
* Be attentive and present with children and participants in the session.
* Avoid distracting participants, however move around the space to encourage engagement and offer support.
* Enrich the ideas and information in session plans with your personal and professional experiences as long as they are suitable for the purpose.
* Treat every participant equally.
* Revise your preparations and ensure proper precautions and risk assessments prior to the session.
* Test technology before use to ensure it is working correctly.
* Enjoy the learning process, together with your participants.

The following five session plans (pgs. 5-15) are supported by the facilitator's knowledge and understanding of the United Nations World Programme on Human Rights Education, and UNICEF Convention on the Rights of the Child. Links to these can be found in the footnotes on page 2. These can also be found in the Reference section on page 16.

**SESSION PLAN 1: CHILDREN'S RIGHTS** - defining what it means to be a child and to relate Children's Rights to children's needs.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Goal | Children’s Rights  Defining what it means to be child and to relate children’s rights to children needs. |
| Equipment List | Stationery, Board markers, Flipchart, Copies of print-out ‘A Short History of Children’s Rights” |
| Duration | 60-90 minutes |
| Instructions | **PART A: What Does It Mean to Be Children?** (20 minutes)  1. Write the words "CHILDREN" and "RIGHTS" at the top of chart paper or a blackboard. Below the word "children" draw a circle.  Ask participants to brainstorm what qualities define a children and write the words or symbols inside the outline. For example, "under 18 years old", "not adult".  2. Next ask participants what they think is needed in order to protect, enhance, and fully develop these qualities of children. List their answers outside the circle, and ask participants to explain them. For example, "education," "friendship," "loving family." (Note: Save this list for use in Part B)  3. Discuss:   * What does it mean to be fully children? How is that different from just "being alive" or "surviving"? * Based on this list, what do people need to live in dignity? * Are all children essentially equal? What is the differences? * What happens when a children or government attempts to deprive someone of something that is necessary to human dignity? * What would happen if you had to give up one of these children necessities?   4. Explain that everything inside the circle relates to dignity, the wholeness of being children. Everything written around the outline represents what is necessary to dignity. Children’s rights are based on these necessities.  Read these sentences from the Convention of the Rights of Child and explain that this document sets the standard for how children beings should behave towards one another so that everyone’s dignity is respected:  Article 1- The Convention of the Rights of Child  **PART B: What Is a Right?** (20 minutes)  1. Brainstorm for the many meanings "right" can have (e.g., "correct," "opposite of left," "just.") Consider common expressions like "We’re within our rights" or "You have no right to say that." Record these different meanings on the board. What is the meaning of "right" when we speak of a children right?  2. In small groups or all together, brainstorm a definition for children rights and write these possibilities on the board. Try to evolve a definition that everyone can agree upon and write it on a chart sheet by itself.  3. Write on the board this definition of children rights:  *Etymologically, the term “child” comes from the Latin infans which means ” the one who does not speak “. For the Roman, this term designates the child from its birth, up to the age of 7 years.*  *This notion evolved a lot through centuries and cultures to finally designate human being from birth until adulthood. But this conception of the child was wide and the age of the majority varied from a culture to another.*  *The*[*Convention on the Rights of the Child*](https://www.humanium.org/en/convention/)*of 1989 defines more precisely the term “child”:*  *“[…] a child is any human being below the age of eighteen years, unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier”*  *The idea, through this definition and all the texts concerning child welfare, is that the child is a human being with rights and dignity.*  *What characterizes the child, is their youth and vulnerability. Indeed, the child is growing, a future adult, who has no means to protect themself.*  *So, the child has to be the object of a particular interest and a specific protection. In this perspective, texts proclaiming the protection of the child and their rights were adopted.*  *Human rights belong to all people regardless of their sex, race, color, language, national origin, age, class, religion, or political beliefs. They are universal, inalienable, indivisible, and interdependent.*   * What is meant by universality? By inalienable? By indivisible? By interdependent? Ask participants to look up these terms in a dictionary   4. Look back at the list of qualities that define a human generated in Part A.  5. Write "SURVIVAL/SUBSISTENCE," "DIGNITY," and "CONVENIENCES AND LUXURIES" on another chart or blackboard. Discuss the meaning of these terms.  Consider the chart made in Part A. Place each item listed as necessary to fully develop human qualities under one of these headings. For example, is education necessary to survival? To human dignity? Is education a convenience or a luxury?  6. Discuss:   * Should children/human rights address only what a human being needs to survive? Why or why not? * Should children’s rights also protect those things you classified under "conveniences and luxuries"? Why or why not? * Some people in the world have only what is necessary to survive while others have luxury and convenience. Is this situation just? Is it a children rights violation? * Can something be done to equalize the enjoyment of children dignity? Should something be done? If so, how? And by whom?   **PART C: What Is a Universal Right?** (20 minutes)  1. Read the comments of the Convention on the Rights of Child:  2. Discuss the meaning of the child and the rights of children:   * Some people feel that universal values or standards of behavior are impossible. What do you think? * Why do you think the UN chose the word **universal** instead of the word **international**? * Paraphrase the final sentence of the quotation. What does it say about individual responsibility for children rights? |

**SESSION PLAN 2: Introducing Children's Rights Education and its goals**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Goal | Introducing Children’s Rights Education and its goals |
| Equipment List | Chairs, Stationery |
| Duration | 60 minutes |
| Instructions | As youth worker working on children’s rights, it is important for us to be able to articulate clearly to others the nature of the work we do and why it is important. In order to do this effectively, we must reflect on and clarify our own understanding of children’s rights education and its goal.  This activity is divided into three parts.  In Part 1, participants will work individually to reflect on their understanding of children rights education and its goal.  In Part 2, participants will work in small groups to further develop their ideas on children’s rights education.  In Part 3, participants will share the results of their small group discussion with the larger group.  15 min Part 1- My Understanding of children rights education  Participants will work individually to answer the questions below concerning their understanding of children’s rights education and its goal. Please ensure that they will write their ideas in exercise sheet provided  *Q1- What is your understanding of children’s rights education? What does it involve? What is its main goal?*  *Q2. Why do you do children’s rights education work? Why do you think it is important?*  Part 2- Review of Definitions of children’s rights education –  Small Group Work  The facilitator divides participants into three groups and has each group review the definitions of children’s rights education provided by the facilitator.  Together with the members of your group, discuss the definitions and draw out the elements that you feel contribute to a better understanding of children’s rights education and its importance.  Part 3- Towards a Common Understanding of children’s rights education  The facilitator reviews the ideas presented in Part 1 and the outcome of small group discussions from Part 2 with the whole group.  Drawing on this information, as a group, agree on and formulate a common understanding or definition of children’s rights education and its main goal.  Ensure that participants continue to refer back to this definition and goal of children’s right education throughout the workshop, making any necessary additions or adjustments to it as your thinking evolves. To facilitate this reflection process the facilitator will leave this information posted in the training room throughout the workshop and invite you to think about it at different points over the next few days. |

**SESSION PLAN 3: A CHILDREN'S RIGHTS TREE - defining Children's Rights and children needs and getting to know the Universal Declaration of Human Rights**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Goal | A Children’s Rights Tree  Defining Children’s Rights and children needs and getting to know Universal Declaration of Human Rights |
| Equipment List | Stationery, Art Supplies, Flipchart |
| Duration | 45 minutes |
| Instructions | 1. Ask participants, working in small groups, to draw a tree on large flipchart paper.   * Write on the tree (in the form of leaves, fruits, flowers, or branches) those children’s rights that they think all people need to live in dignity and justice. * A children’s rights tree needs roots to grow and flourish. Give the tree roots and label them with the things that make human rights flourish. For example, health, the rule of law, or education.   2. When drawings are complete, ask each group to present its tree and explain its reasons for the items they have included.  **Going Further**  1. Match the fruits, leaves, and branches with articles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and write the number of the article next to each item.  2. Display these trees in the classroom or in public places.  3. Identify rights concerns that are of particular concern to you and your community. |

**SESSION PLAN 4: DRAW-THE-WORD GAME - developing the knowledge on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNICEF)**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Goal | Draw-the-word” game  Developing the knowledge Convention on the Rights of the Child |
| Equipment List | Stationery, A4 size Papers, Flipchart, |
| Duration | 45 minutes |
| Instructions | 1. Ask participants to get into small groups of four to five people and to choose a name for their team.  2. Explain that in the activity they will be working in teams. You will give one person in each team an Article from the Convention on the Rights of the Child to draw. The others in the team have to guess which right it is. The team that guesses first scores a point. The team with the most points at the end wins.  3. Tell the teams to collect several sheets of paper and a pencil and to find somewhere to sit around the room. The teams should be spread out so they do not overhear each other.  4. Call up one member from each team. Give them one of the rights on your list.  5. Tell them to return to their groups and to make a drawing to represent the right while their team mates try to guess what it is. They may only draw images; no numbers or words may be used. No speaking is allowed except to confirm the correct answer.  6.The rest of the team may only say their guesses; they may not ask questions.  7.After each round, ask all the drawers to write on their picture what the right was whether they finished it or not, and to put the paper to one side.  8.Do a second round; call new people to be the drawers and give them a different right. Do 7 or 8 rounds. A different person should draw in each round. Try to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to draw at least once.  9.At the end, ask the groups to pin up their pictures so that the different interpretations and images of the different rights can be compared and discussed.  *Debriefing and evaluation*  Begin by reviewing the activity itself and then go on to talk about what people know about children’s rights.  \_ Was it easier or harder than people had expected to depict children’s rights?  \_ How did people choose how to depict a particular right? Where did they get the images from?  \_ How do the different images of each right compare? How many different ways were there to depict and interpret the same concept?  \_ After all the pictures have been reviewed, ask how much - or how little – participants discovered they knew about children’s rights.  \_ Do they think children’s rights have any relevance to their own lives? Which ones? |

**SESSION PLAN 5: ELECTIONEERING - exploring rights and responsibilities connected with democracy and the right to participate in the democratic process**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Goal | Electioneering  Exploring rights and responsibilities connected with democracy and right to participate in democratic process |
| Equipment List | An open space, A4 sized cards, coloured pens and tape |
| Duration | 45 minutes |
| Instructions | *Preparation: Make two signs, “agree” and “disagree”, and tape them one at either end of a long wall. Make sure there is enough space along the wall for people to form a straight line*  1. Point out the two signs at either end of the wall, and explain that you are going to read out a statement, with which they may agree to a greater or lesser extent.  2. Select one statement from the list below and read it out to the group.  3. Tell people to position themselves along the wall between the two signs according to “how much” they agree or disagree: if they agree or disagree totally they should stand at one of the ends; otherwise they should stand somewhere between the two points.  4. When people have positioned themselves along the line, invite the two at the furthest extremes to occupy the two chairs in the centre of the room. Everyone else should now gather around the chairs, positioning themselves behind the person whose view they agree with “most”; or occupying a position in the centre if they are undecided.  5. Give each of the people sitting in the chairs one minute to state their reasons for agreeing or disagreeing with the original statement. No one should interrupt or assist them. Everyone should listen in silence.  6. At the end of the minute, ask the others in the group to move behind one or the other of the speakers (they cannot remain undecided), so that there is one group of people “for” the statement under discussion, and one group “against”. Allow the two groups ten minutes apart from one another to prepare arguments supporting their position and to select a different speaker to present these arguments.  7. At the end of the ten minutes, call the groups back and invite the two new speakers to occupy the two chairs with their “supporters” around them.  8. Give these speakers three minutes each to deliver their arguments, at the end of which time, supporters for one or the other side may change position and move to the opposite group if the opposite side’s arguments have been convincing.  9. Give the groups a further five minutes apart to work on their arguments and select a third speaker. Again, after the speeches, allow people to change position if they wish to.  10. Bring the group back together for the debriefing.  ***Debriefing and evaluation***  Now move on to reflect on the process and purpose of discussion as a form, and on the reasons for valuing a pluralist society. Try not to get drawn back into discussion of the issue itself.  - Did anyone change their mind during the course of the discussion? If they did, what were the arguments that convinced them?  - Do people think they were influenced by things other than the actual arguments that were being put forward, for example, by peer pressure, emotional language or a feeling of rivalry?  - For those that did not change their opinion in the course of the discussion, was there any purpose in talking through these issues? Can they imagine any evidence that might persuade them to change their views?  - Why do people hold different opinions? What should be done about this in a democratic society?  - Should all opinions be tolerated in a democracy? |

**SUMMARY**This section of the 'Protect Project' toolkit covers the key elements of Children's Rights Education for social change and related session delivery for practitioners. It outlines the core considerations for CRE, including exploration of human/children rights and needs. It introduces the key concepts of Children's Rights, to support the development of essential competencies, skills and attitudes for youth workers and other facilitators working with children and young people. It provides five session plans that can support the delivery of educational activities, training and events on Children's Rights.

**REFERENCES**

# UNICEF, 2010. *The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.* [Online] Available at: https://www.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/UNCRC\_united\_nations\_convention\_on\_the\_rights\_of\_the\_child.pdf [Accessed 25 Nov 2022].

United Nations, 2010-2014. *Second phase (2010-2014) of the World Programme for Human Rights Education.* [Online]   
Available at: https://www.ohchr.org/en/resources/educators/human-rights-education-training/world-programme-human-rights-education/phase2  
[Accessed 25 November 2022].

1. (United Nations, 2010-2014)  
   Online link: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/resources/educators/human-rights-education-training/world-programme-human-rights-education/phase2> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. (UNICEF, 2010)

   Link to online PDF: <https://www.unicef.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2010/05/UNCRC_united_nations_convention_on_the_rights_of_the_child.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)