

# LESSON 1

## The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child: An Introduction

A Middle School Unit (Grades 6–8)

## WHAT DO ALL CHILDREN NEED?

TOTAL TIME: 60 MINUTES

### Overview

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Students will brainstorm, discuss, and itemize what they believe all children need to be healthy and safe, and to develop to their full potential. Visual resources will be used to support students.

### Objectives

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Students will:

- Explore what every child needs to be safe and healthy, and to develop to his or her full potential.
- Raise their awareness of some of the problems facing children worldwide.

### Materials Needed

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- Videos  
U.S. Fund for UNICEF: *Achieving Zero*  
(<http://www.youtube.com/user/UNICEFUSA#p/a/FA6F0519DC4EA679/0/m1zP3H-I0tk>) or U.S. Fund for UNICEF: *Whatever it Takes*  
([http://teachertube.com/viewVideo.php?video\\_id=151299&title=Whatever\\_it\\_Takes\\_to\\_Save\\_a\\_Child](http://teachertube.com/viewVideo.php?video_id=151299&title=Whatever_it_Takes_to_Save_a_Child))
- UNICEF Voices of Youth Digital Diaries ([http://www.unicef.org/voy/takeaction/takeaction\\_2692.html](http://www.unicef.org/voy/takeaction/takeaction_2692.html))
- Handout 1: What is the Convention on the Rights of the Child?

### Directions

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1. Begin by asking students to brainstorm a list of the things they think all children need to be safe and healthy, and to develop to their full potential. Each student should create their own list.
2. Divide the larger group into small groups of 4 or 5 students. Ask them to share their ideas with the group. Each group should compile a list of what they think every child needs by grouping similar ideas and discussing any disagreements.

3. Groups should consider: What is the difference between needs and wants? Which needs should be considered human rights for children and families? Are there any rights that you take for granted that other children may not be afforded? Who should make sure that these needs and rights are met?
4. Provoke deeper thought through one of the following visual strategies:
  - a. **Video Clip: *Achieving Zero* Length: 3m 40s**  
**Description:** Every day 24,000 children die of preventable causes; UNICEF believes that number should be zero. This video highlights UNICEF's work to achieve that goal, while highlighting some of the needs and rights of children worldwide.
  - b. **Video: *Whatever it Takes* Length: 3m 47s**  
**Description:** This video highlights UNICEF's work throughout the world, while highlighting some of the needs and rights of children.
  - c. UNICEF Voices of Youth Digital Diaries  
**Description:** Voices of Youth Digital Diaries are all about young people who want to know more...do more...and say more about the world. These reports are first-person accounts by young people from around the world.
5. Ask students to reflect through free writing on the voices or video clip that they hear or view. How do the images or voices affect their initial ideas about needs and rights?
6. Ask students to revisit their lists of needs as a small group and add to them as needed.
7. If you will be continuing to the next lesson, hold on to the lists for Lesson 2: *Introducing the Convention on the Rights of the Child*.

## Extension (Class discussion)

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1. Which needs did you consider to be human rights? Why?
2. Which rights did you take for granted?
3. Which rights did you add after viewing the additional information?
4. Who should make sure that all children and families have these rights

## Homework

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To provide students with background information on the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), have the class read Handout 1: What is the Convention on the Rights of the Child? and answer its accompanying questions.

## Assessment/Evaluation

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Students will be assessed based on their ability to

1. Identify things that children need to be safe and healthy, and to develop to their full potential.
2. Reconsider and elaborate on their initial ideas based on additional information and discussions with peers.

# What is the Convention on the Rights of the Child?

Name: .....

## Directions:

Read, "What is the Convention on the Rights of the Child," then answer the questions.



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Viet Nam , 2009

Children clap during a learning activity in Ban Pho Preschool in Bac Han District in remote Lao Cai Province . The UNICEF-supported school promotes child participation and other child-friendly activities in a safe learning environment and includes classes taught in the children's indigenous language.

## What is the Convention on the Rights of the Child?

In November 1989, after nearly a decade of negotiations, the United Nations General Assembly unanimously adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child—the CRC. For the first time in history, an international treaty recognized that children are not possessions, but people who have human rights. It also recognized the incredible importance of parents and families in providing the best environment for children to grow.

The CRC is the most widely accepted human rights treaty in history. To date, 193 nations have ratified this important treaty. The only two UN

member states that have not ratified the CRC are Somalia and the United States. In the United States, agreeing to a treaty requires several steps. First the President or a designated representative needs to sign the treaty; then the President submits the treaty to the U.S. Senate with explanations and interpretations of the treaty's provisions. The Senate must approve the treaty, or give its "advice and consent," by two-thirds majority. Only after that can the President formally ratify the treaty. In the case of the CRC, President Clinton agreed to sign the treaty in February 1995; but it was never submitted to the Senate for consideration.

Although the CRC includes over 50 separate articles, the entire document is based on four foundational principles: children should be free from discrimination; government policies should be based on the best interests of the child; children should survive and develop to their full potential; and children's views and perspectives are important and need to be heard. The CRC refers to the family as the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of its members, particularly children.

### How UNICEF Uses the CRC to Help Children

Around the world, UNICEF and many other child-focused organizations use the CRC as an important tool to ensure that government policies and programs protect children:

- In Niger, which has the highest incidence of child marriage in the world, UNICEF and NGOs have used the CRC to help pass national laws against child marriage, and worked with tribal leaders to speak out against this traditional practice, which deprives girls of their childhood.
- In Ukraine, UNICEF used CRC principles to help the Ukrainian government transform the state child care system to support foster family care for orphaned children instead of institutionalizing them.

These are just two of many examples of how the CRC helped governments change their policies to the benefit of children and families.

1. In your own words, write a short summary explaining the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

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2. Do you think it is important to have a treaty that outlines the rights of children? Please explain your answer.

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3. What additional information would you like to learn about the Convention on the Rights of the Child?

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