

THE UN CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD AND SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS



A Young Person's Guide

All children are born with fundamental human rights. Rights define what you are free to do, as well as the information and services to which you are entitled.

What is the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)?

The CRC (1989) is a set of legal rules. The CRC has 54 different paragraphs (called articles) that cover the rights of children and young people. Some of these rights apply to your sexual and reproductive health.

191 Governments around the world have signed and approved the CRC. They have promised to make sure that all children and young people below the age of 18 years, survive, grow, are protected and participate as active members of society.

What is this leaflet all about?

In this leaflet you will find out how some of the articles in the CRC relate to your sexual and reproductive health. The articles taken from the CRC are in quotes, in the coloured boxes below each article you will find information on how this article can be interpreted to protect and/or advance your sexual and reproductive health.

What are Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights?

These rights include being able to:

- have a happy life and personal relationships
- decide yourself whether to be sexually active or not
- enjoy a safe and healthy sex life in which you protect yourself and are protected by your partner against disease and illness
- feel completely well and happy in your body and your mind
- decide if, when and how many children to have
- make sure that women and girls stay healthy while pregnant
- make sure that babies are born healthy

Based on the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development Paragraph 7.2

Article 2

States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.

All the rights set out in the CRC apply to all children and young people under the age of 18.

All Children Have Rights

These rights belong to you and no one can take them away from you, no matter whether you are a girl or a boy, rich or poor, married or unmarried, whatever your religion, colour, nationality, sexual orientation, disability, or health status, for example, being HIV-positive.

The Right to Life

Article 6

1. States Parties recognize that every child has the inherent right to life.
2. States Parties shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child.

Every child has the right to live, grow up and have a healthy life.

Some sexual and reproductive health problems, such as HIV/AIDS and unsafe abortion, can lead to illness and death. With information, skills and services that help you to make informed choices, you can protect yourself and others from unwanted pregnancy, HIV and other sexually transmitted infections.

- **Your government is responsible for making sure you can enjoy all of your rights protected by the CRC.**
- **By agreeing to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, governments must make sure you are safe, happy and healthy keeping in mind your 'best interests'.**
- **A United Nations 'Committee on the Rights of the Child' makes sure that governments are protecting your rights.**
- **How these rights apply to you will vary according to how old you are. This means that rights are important to you in different ways at different ages. Governments, parents and adults should keep in mind that as you grow up they need to respect your capabilities and encourage you to act and think for yourself.**
- **Exercising your rights responsibly means that you must understand that other people have rights, too, and you have to respect them.**
- **We only have space here to put some parts of the CRC articles. You can read the full text of the Convention at www.unicef.org/crc/crc.htm**
- **The IPPF Charter gives you more information on your sexual and reproductive rights at <http://www.ippf.org/charter/index.htm>**

Produced by:

Action Canada for Population and Development

Advocates for Youth

Center for Reproductive Law and Policy

Dutch Council on Youth and Population

Ipas

Inter-American Parliamentary Group on Population and Development

International Planned Parenthood Federation

Network of Asia Pacific Youth

World Population Foundation

Youth Coalition

The Right to Health



Article 24

States Parties recognize the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and to facilities for the treatment of illness and rehabilitation of health. States Parties shall strive to ensure that no child is deprived of his or her right of access to such health-care services ...



Every child has the right to be as healthy as possible and to be able to access the best possible health-care services.

For example:

- You can visit a doctor or nurse to receive the full range of sexual and reproductive health services that are available and legal in your country, including contraceptives, abortion services and understandable advice about your sexual and reproductive health.
- When you visit a health centre you are made to feel welcome, safe and comfortable.
- Services should be affordable for you.
- No one should turn you away or stop you from receiving services, or demand that you get someone else's permission first (e.g. the permission of a parent or spouse, if you are married.)



“

Article 14

State parties shall respect the right of the child to freedom of thought, conscience, and religion...

State Parties shall respect the rights and duties of the parents and... legal guardians, to provide direction to the child in the exercise of his or her right in a manner consistent with the evolving capacity of the child.

”

Children and young persons have the right to freely think and believe what they like as long as it does not harm anyone else.

You have the right to form your own views about sexuality and reproductive health issues. As you grow older your views about your sexual and reproductive health should be taken more seriously into consideration.

“

Article 15

State parties recognise the rights of the child to freedom of association and to freedom of peaceful assembly...

”

Children have the right to meet friends and form groups to express ideas, so long as it does not break the law.



You have the right to publicly demand what you are legally entitled to. Some ways of doing this include meeting with friends and discussing issues or forming groups.

The Right to Privacy and Confidentiality



Article 16

No child shall be subjected to arbitrary or unlawful interference with his or her privacy, family, home or correspondence, nor to unlawful attacks on his or her honour and reputation...



A child's private life should remain private.

If you tell a medical person or a teacher something that you don't want anyone else to know, then he or she should respect your privacy. If you have been abused, adults may have a duty to inform others who can help protect you or help you protect your and your interests.

The Right to be Protected from Harmful Practices



Article 24

...States Parties shall take all effective and appropriate measures with a view to abolishing traditional practices prejudicial to the health of children...



Practices that are bad for children's health should be stopped.

Some traditional practices are bad for your health and against your rights, such as early and forced marriages, female genital mutilation (FGM) which is also called female circumcision or female genital cutting and killing girls in the name of honour. You have the right to know about the dangers of such practices and be protected against them.

The Right to Education



Article 24

... States Parties... shall take appropriate measures:
(e) To ensure that all segments of society, in particular parents and children, are informed, have access to education and are supported in the use of basic knowledge of child health and nutrition, the advantages of breast-feeding, hygiene and environmental sanitation and the prevention of accidents;
(f) To develop preventive health care, guidance for parents and family planning education and services...



All children and young people have the right to information on good health practices.

You should be given wide-ranging and easy to understand information on sexual and reproductive issues that will let you feel comfortable with yourself, your body and your sexuality. This information should enable you to make your own decisions about your sexual and reproductive health. You should be given this information without being judged or being made to feel embarrassed or guilty.



Article 28

States Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity:
(a) Make primary education compulsory and available free to all...



All children should have full access to free primary education.



Everyone has the right to receive an education. You should not be denied education simply because you are a girl, are poor or have a disability. If you become pregnant or have children you still have the right to go to school.

The Right to Freedom from Abuse and Exploitation



Article 19

State parties shall take all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child...

Article 34

States Parties undertake to protect the child from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse...



No one, including people who care for children, should physically, sexually or mentally hurt a child. The government should make sure that all children are protected from abuse and must also take action to help abused children.



This means no one, including the people who take care of you, should force you to do things with your body that you do not wish to do. You have the right to say no to sex or any other unwanted act such as being touched or being forced to touch other people. Child trafficking, child pornography and prostitution are against your rights.



Article 39

States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to promote physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of a child victim of: any form of neglect, exploitation, or abuse, torture or any other form of cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment...



If a child has been hurt, abused or neglected, support services should be provided to help the child deal with his/her experiences, feelings, and physical health needs.