

KNOW YOUR RIGHTS AND CLAIM THEM



**CHILD RIGHTS
EDUCATION TOOLKIT**

**AMNESTY
INTERNATIONAL**





ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The Toolkit was edited by Kristin Dannevig Helena and designed by Off Colour Design.

Note:

[Text in blue](#) throughout are weblinks (which are also listed in full on page [83](#) at the end of the toolkit). If you are using the digital pdf they, and the links in the footnotes, can be clicked to take you to the site. Clicking on page [numbers](#) within the text can also be used for internal navigation.

Cover photo:
Teenagers taking action against climate change.

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Children at a workshop in Bolivia, where they learn about the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.



ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT

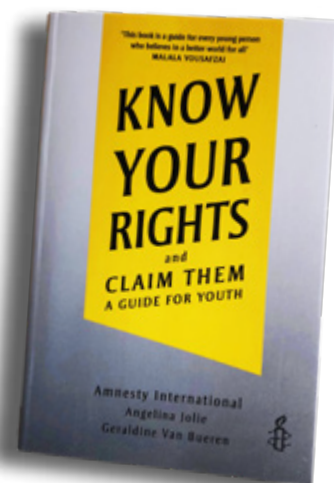
This toolkit is designed for teachers, educators and activists supporting children aged 12-17 in their journeys of reflection, critical analysis and action on child rights. It can be used in formal settings, such as schools, and in non-formal settings outside the classroom. It uses inclusive, participatory methodologies to engage, inspire and empower children to understand their rights and the rights of others, and to take action.

Through the activities contained in this toolkit, participants will gain a better understanding of their rights and how to claim them, in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). They will learn to consider all children as holders of inalienable rights, recognize that some children experience limited access to their rights, and develop a sense of solidarity with other children.

As a human rights education (HRE) resource, the toolkit ultimately aims to contribute to a universal culture of human rights by building the foundations of a rights-respecting society. To that end, it offers practical activities to equip children with the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes they need to advocate for rights today and as they grow older.

While this toolkit can be used independently, it also overlaps with two other resources which you are encouraged to consult:

- **The free online course *An Introduction to Child Rights*, available on Amnesty International's Human Rights Academy***;
- **The book *Know Your Rights and Claim Them: A Guide for Youth*, a collaboration between Angelina Jolie and Amnesty International, available to order [here](#)**.**



* academy.amnesty.org/learn

** andersenpress.co.uk/know-your-rights-and-claim-them/

CONTENT AND HOW TO USE THIS TOOLKIT

This toolkit contains 12 activities divided into four sections:

- SECTION 1** focuses on basic knowledge about child rights and the CRC.
- SECTION 2** focuses on child rights in practice, including on how access to rights varies for different groups of children.
- SECTION 3** focuses on how children themselves can claim, promote and defend their rights.
- SECTION 4** focuses on children’s rights and on the risks they face when they use digital tools.

The activities are developed for use with children aged 12-17. To ensure that the content and activities are age appropriate and inclusive, see guidance under ‘other important tips’.

Each activity takes about 60 min to complete, and the full toolkit represents about 12 hours. The activities are designed for groups of 20-30 students and may need to be adapted for smaller or larger groups. They should ideally be conducted in order, for instance, one activity per week. However, as the activities are independent the facilitator can choose to only run just one or several activities, depending on the time available and the relevance to participants.

The facilitator can select the most suitable activities by looking at the learning outcomes outlined at the top of each activity. They can also adapt activities to make them longer or shorter.

Eight of the 12 activities require a handout included at the end of the activities. For some activities a single copy or small number of copies are sufficient for the whole group, while others require one copy for each participant. This information is indicated at the beginning of each activity under “What you need”.

Each section has background information providing the facilitator with useful insights to carry out the activities. Relevant theoretical insights are also provided in the activity description in boxes like this one:

According to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, a child is defined as every human being below the age of eighteen, unless majority is attained earlier under the law (Article 1 CRC).

References to CRC Articles are in *italics* in the activities. Throughout this document “children” are understood as anyone below the age of 18, in line with the Convention.

CREATING A SAFE SPACE CONDUCTIVE TO LEARNING

When facilitating discussions around child rights, it is essential to ensure a safe and supportive environment for all children by prioritizing safeguarding. This includes:

- Having clear protocols for reporting and addressing any disclosures of harm or abuse.
- Creating an open and respectful space where children feel empowered to express themselves without fear of judgment or repercussions.
- Ensuring that all facilitators and staff members are trained on safeguarding policies (relevant to their institution or community), and that children know who they can approach if they feel uncomfortable or unsafe.

As a teacher, educator or activist your role is to support children’s learning journey by building a safe and enabling learning environment that centres their experience and prioritizes their active participation.

It is essential to move away from an adult-centric perspective and to consider children as people with autonomy and agency. In this intergenerational learning space, your role is to accompany and assist them, rather than to lead or drive the learning process.

Key to building this enabling learning environment is to ensure that it feels safe: a space where children can be their authentic selves without fear of being judged or marginalized, can practise new skills and receive constructive feedback.

The following principles can be useful for creating a safe and inclusive learning space:

- **We believe in dialogue.** We explore issues with an emphasis on listening and empathy and move away from the Us-vs-Them thinking and arguments.
- **We start from a position of trust.** Unkind and discriminatory speech and behaviour will be addressed by explaining why it is inappropriate, without shaming. We will ‘call in’ rather than ‘call out’ (e.g. raising an issue privately instead of publicly).
- **This is a learning, not a ‘knowing’ space.** We are all responsible for our own learning, yet we respect expertise where it exists, whether professional or in the form of lived experience.
- **We acknowledge that power relations are always at play** between facilitators and participants, and among participants. While we encourage free expression we are mindful of its effect on others’ feelings and ability to speak.

GOVERNANCE

The way the school is run, including both formal and informal decision-making systems.



RELATIONSHIPS

How members of the school community interact.



CURRICULUM

How human rights are taught and learned.

ENVIRONMENT

Setting in which people learn.

OTHER IMPORTANT TIPS

It is also important to note that conflicts and strong emotions may arise during the activities. Dealing with these situations in a safe space is necessary and part of the learning process, given that participants will explore challenging questions while being encouraged to express their opinions and think critically. The following advice may be useful in this respect:

- **Allow enough time** for discussion so participants can express their views and ask questions.
- **Be aware of diverse** life experiences and identities in the group, including age, race, class, gender, sexuality, religion, socio-economic background, migration status, disability, etc. This can lead participants to be more sensitive to certain issues.
- **Be aware of each individual person's** reaction to the activities and be ready to step in or out as needed.
- **In case of conflict**, challenge any hurtful statements and ensure that each person involved has space to reflect and calm down.
- **Offer a warning** before addressing a potentially triggering topic and the possibility for participants to opt out without having to justify why.
- **Designate a quiet zone:** This can give participants a place to reflect and calm down if they opt out, or to simply have a break without feeling isolated or singled out.
- Tell participants that they are **not expected to reveal** anything about themselves unless they feel comfortable to do so. Let them know if you are obligated to report any knowledge of abuse for their own protection.
- Devote enough time for **debriefing** at the end of every activity. This provides space not only for reflection and deeper learning, but also for managing emotions that might have come up.
- **Prepare:** Read the background information for each section and adapt the activities to the children's specific context and age.
- **Adapt:** Make sure the activities are accessible for everyone's physical abilities, disabilities, language comprehension, and adapted to any difficulties with reading, drawing or listening.
- **Remember:** Prepare the right materials ahead of each activity.
- **Have fun!** The sections should be interesting for both the facilitator and the participants.

Many more facilitation tips can be found in Amnesty International's [Facilitation Manual for human rights education](#).

Finally, keeping a **reflective journal** throughout the activities can allow children to document their child rights learning journey. Ideally, allow them least five minutes at the end of each activity to write in it, or encourage them to make notes in their own time.

Some suggested questions for the reflective journal could be:

- What struck me about this activity?
- What new ideas or realizations do I take away?
- Why did it resonate with me (or not)?
- Do I feel inspired to take action now – and if so, what kind of action?

WHOLE SCHOOL APPROACHES

Finally, it is important to note that child rights education aims to go beyond teaching materials towards transforming the whole learning environment. Indeed, as a form of HRE, child rights education encompasses education about, *for* and *through* child rights.

While this toolkit focuses primarily on education *about* and *for* child rights (by enabling children to know and claim them), education *through* child rights remains a cornerstone which cannot exist where children's rights are violated.

Amnesty International supports a holistic – or 'whole school' – approach to child rights education through its Human Rights Friendly School programme.

These are schools where human rights are learned, taught, practised, respected, protected and promoted. From how decisions are made and how people treat each other, to the curriculum, extra-curricular activities and teaching environments, the school becomes an exemplary model for human rights education.

See Amnesty International's website for more information, including a toolkit for teachers and administrators on how to [become a human rights friendly school](#).

Pretoria High School for Girls, a Human Rights Friendly School, create a protest art installation that called for an end to sexual violence against women in South Africa, 2013.





POPULATION
MEDIA CENTER
Avenue 1st Floor
17 The Market Complex
Freetown, Sierra Leone

School girls walk to school in Freetown, Sierra Leone.

SECTION 1

THE IDEA OF CHILD RIGHTS

This section focuses on basic knowledge about child rights and the CRC.

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LEARNING OUTCOMES

Participants will be able to:

- describe what child rights mean to them;
- know about and understand what the CRC is;
- explain that child rights are universal, inalienable, indivisible and interdependent;
- discuss adult-centric statements about children from a child rights perspective;
- name the four child rights principles and explain why they are important for children.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The idea of child rights is connected to that of human rights. It rests on the belief that all human beings, regardless of their age, have inherent value and dignity and possess certain inalienable rights, simply by virtue of being human.

The United Nations (UN) has designated nine core international human rights instruments, or treaties. These focus on civil and political rights; economic, social, and cultural rights; combating racial and gender-based discrimination; prohibiting torture and enforced disappearances; and protecting the rights of migrant workers, persons with disabilities and children.

These treaties were adopted over 40 years between 1966 and 2006. All were inspired by a seminal human rights document, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), adopted in 1948 following the Second World War.

A set of human rights principles can be derived from these different instruments. When applied to children, these principles indicate that child rights are:

- **Universal:** All children have those rights just by being children, regardless of who they are and where they live.
- **Inalienable:** No one, neither a family member nor a government, has the right to take these rights away from the child.
- **Indivisible:** All rights are equally important and cannot be separated.
- **Interdependent:** Denying one right will affect all the other ones — for instance, not having access to quality food can make it difficult to learn and receive a good education.
- **Accountable:** The government is responsible to make sure that children can enjoy all of their rights.

WHY DO CHILDREN NEED A SPECIAL SET OF RIGHTS?

If human rights instruments generally apply to children as well as adults, why do children need a special set of rights? There are several reasons:

- Children – especially the youngest – depend on adults to access most of their rights.
- Children may be particularly vulnerable to abuse, exploitation and neglect.
- Children are often not viewed as individual people with autonomy and agency.

These three reasons have led the CRC to focus on, respectively, “provision”, “protection” and “participation” rights (see page 13).

Children also need a special set of rights because some of their specific rights are not covered by other human rights instruments, such as the right:

- to play;
- not to be separated from one’s parents or caregivers;
- to be cared for in the absence of one’s family.

‘Adult-centrism’ refers to the socially constructed belief that because adults are more experienced than children their perspectives have greater value.

Although adult-centrism feeds harmful stereotypes concerning children, adults use this, unconsciously or not, to justify holding more power than children (for a list of adult-centric statements and a response grounded in child rights, see Activity 2, page 20).

THE UN CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

The CRC was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989. To date, it is the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history with [196 state parties](#).

By ratifying the Convention, states pledge to implement its provisions, namely to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of the child as enshrined in the Convention.

The only country in the world that has not yet ratified the Convention is the USA. Some politicians in the USA oppose ratification, arguing that it could limit the country's sovereignty and interfere with family life.

The CRC established the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child, a group of 18 international human rights experts tasked with examining the implementation of the Convention. Every five years, each state party is expected to produce a report on progress made in implementing the Convention, after which the Committee makes recommendations for improvements.

The Committee also issues interpretations of the Convention on a specific right or topic, which are called General Comments. As of 2023, the Committee issued 25 General Comments – the last ones focusing respectively on digital issues, the child justice system, international migration, and most recently General Comment 26 on children's rights and the environment with a focus on climate change.

The Convention has been supplemented by these three optional protocols, which state parties to the Convention are encouraged to also ratify: the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict; the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography; and the Optional Protocol on a Communications Procedure.

CONTENT OF THE CONVENTION

The CRC is composed of 54 articles. While some articles pertain to children in specific situations (e.g. armed conflict, detention, etc.) or to how the CRC works, most articles can be classified in one of these three categories (as mentioned above):

- **Provision:** These are rights to access resources and services to ensure children's survival and development to their full potential, e.g. food, health care, education and play.
- **Protection:** These are rights ensuring that children are not exploited or hurt, e.g. protection from abuse and neglect, regulation of child labour and best interests of the child.
- **Participation:** These are rights ensuring that children can take part in decisions that involve or affect them, e.g. freedoms of expression and association, and to have their views given due weight.

Moreover, as explained by the Committee in its General Comments, four articles have special importance because they help interpret all the other articles. These four articles therefore constitute the four "child rights principles":

- **Non-discrimination** (*Article 2*): All children have the same rights and should be treated equally. It is therefore forbidden to treat a child unfairly because of who they are, for instance because of their race, gender, religion, nationality, disability, etc.
- **Best interests of the child** (*Article 3*): The best interests of the child should be a primary consideration in all actions and decisions concerning a child, especially for younger children and for decisions about who should be taking care of the child.

- **Survival & development** (*Article 6*): Children should be able to survive their childhood and develop to their full potential. They should have access to basic services and to equality of opportunity.
- **Participation** (*Article 12*): Children have the right to express their views, be listened to and taken seriously. They should be able to contribute to decisions affecting their lives, in accordance with their age and maturity.



A Rohingya boy hoping to escape from the trauma of his past with a new chance in life.

REGIONAL CHILD RIGHTS INSTRUMENTS

In parallel to advances at the international level, progress on child rights has also been achieved at the regional level. Following the UN's adoption of the CRC, several regional organizations also adopted child rights instruments reflecting their respective specific context, including:

- African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1990)
- American Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990)
- Arab Charter on the Rights of the Child (1996)
- European Convention on the Exercise of Children's Rights (1996)

While most CRC provisions are included in these documents, some regional instruments include additional provisions that resonate with the culture from which they originate. For instance, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child stipulates that “every child shall have responsibilities towards [their] family and society”, including the duty “to respect [their] parents, superiors and elders at all times”.

These different regional instruments are testament to both the diversity and universality of the idea of child rights.

ACTIVITY 1

THE CHILD RIGHTS TREE

Creating a group drawing where the tree's branches, leaves and fruit represent child rights.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Participants will be able to:

- describe what child rights mean to them;
- know about and understand what the CRC is;
- explain that child rights are universal, inalienable, indivisible and interdependent.

TIMING

60 min

WHAT YOU NEED

- Large sheets of paper (e.g. flipchart or board)
- Colour markers or crayons
- Copies of the simplified CRC (one per group – see Handout A, pages 18 and 19.)

THIS ACTIVITY HAS 5 STEPS

- | | | |
|--------|--------------------------|--------|
| Step 1 | Introducing the activity | 5 min |
| Step 2 | Creating the trees | 20 min |
| Step 3 | Linking to child rights | 15 min |
| Step 4 | Discussion | 15 min |
| Step 5 | Taking action | 5 min |



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STEP 1 INTRODUCING THE ACTIVITY 5 MIN

- Ask participants: “What do you need to grow up healthy and happy?” (e.g., a home, friends, be able to express yourself, food, education, safety). List these needs on the flipchart/board.
- Divide into three or four small groups and give each group a large sheet of flipchart paper.
- Explain that each group will draw a tree. They can start by writing “child” on the trunk of the tree, then draw branches, leaves, flowers and fruit and write on them all the things that all children need to grow, flourish and be happy. On the tree roots, they can write who is responsible for making this happen.

STEP 2 CREATING THE TREES 20 MIN

- Each group creates its child rights tree using colour markers or crayons.

STEP 3 LINKING TO CHILD RIGHTS 15 MIN

- Explain to participants that to guarantee that all children have what they need to grow and flourish, every child has special protections and freedoms called child rights, just because they are young. These rights make sure that all children can grow up safe, healthy and happy, with everything they need to live a good life.
- Give each participant a copy of the simplified CRC (Handout A, pages 18 and 19).

Drawing a Child Rights Tree during a workshop.



- Explain that children's rights have been compiled in an international convention, which is an agreement between states or countries to do what the convention says. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) has 54 articles, all listed on the first page of the handout. The second page summarizes its main provisions.
- Ask groups to compare their child rights tree with the handout and to add new words to their tree if they want to.

STEP 4 DISCUSSION

15 MIN

- **First**, remind everyone that this activity is about child rights: all the things that a child needs to grow and flourish like a tree, and live a good life, in dignity, justice and peace.
- **Second**, discuss some of the following questions in plenary:
 1. **Do all children have the same rights?**
 2. **Are certain rights more important than others?**
 3. **Has anyone got the right to take these rights away from you?**
 4. **If one of these rights is denied, what happens to the other rights?**
 5. **Who is responsible for protecting these rights?**
- To conclude the discussion, explain that child rights follow the same principles of all human rights. This means child rights are:
 - ▶ **Universal:** All children have these rights just because they are children, regardless of who they are and where they live.

- ▶ **Indivisible:** All rights are equally important and cannot be separated.
- ▶ **Inalienable:** No one (neither a family member nor a government) has the right to take these rights away from the child.
- ▶ **Interdependent:** Denying one right will affect all the other ones – for instance, not having access to quality food can make it difficult to learn and receive a good education.
- ▶ **Accountable:** The government and other actors are responsible to make sure that children have all of their rights respected.

- It's important to emphasize that while governments have the main responsibility for protecting and promoting children's rights, other actors such as schools, corporations, parents, and all other adults and children themselves also play a role.

STEP 5 TAKING ACTION

5 MIN

- Brainstorm ideas for where to display the groups' trees to form a 'child rights forest': at school, a place of worship, community centre, etc. so other children and adults can learn about child rights too.

HANDOUT A SIMPLIFIED CRC

<p>1 DEFINITION OF A CHILD</p>	<p>2 NO DISCRIMINATION</p>	<p>3 BEST INTERESTS OF THE CHILD</p>	<p>4 MAKING RIGHTS REAL</p>	<p>5 FAMILY GUIDANCE AS CHILDREN DEVELOP</p>	<p>6 LIFE, SURVIVAL AND DEVELOPMENT</p>	<p>7 NAME AND NATIONALITY</p>
<p>8 IDENTITY</p>	<p>9 KEEPING FAMILIES TOGETHER</p>	<p>10 CONTACT WITH PARENTS ACROSS COUNTRIES</p>	<p>11 PROTECTION FROM KIDNAPPING</p>	<p>12 RESPECT FOR CHILDREN'S VIEWS</p>	<p>13 SHARING THOUGHTS FREELY</p>	<p>14 FREEDOM OF THOUGHT AND RELIGION</p>
<p>15 SETTING UP OR JOINING GROUPS</p>	<p>16 PROTECTION OF PRIVACY</p>	<p>17 ACCESS TO INFORMATION</p>	<p>18 RESPONSIBILITY OF PARENTS</p>	<p>19 PROTECTION FROM VIOLENCE</p>	<p>20 CHILDREN WITHOUT FAMILIES</p>	<p>21 CHILDREN WHO ARE ADOPTED</p>
<p>22 REFUGEE CHILDREN</p>	<p>23 CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES</p>	<p>24 HEALTH, WATER, FOOD, ENVIRONMENT</p>	<p>25 REVIEW OF A CHILD'S PLACEMENT</p>	<p>26 SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC HELP</p>	<p>27 FOOD, CLOTHING, A SAFE HOME</p>	<p>28 ACCESS TO EDUCATION</p>
<p>29 AIMS OF EDUCATION</p>	<p>30 MINORITY CULTURE, LANGUAGE AND RELIGION</p>	<p>31 REST, PLAY, CULTURE, ARTS</p>	<p>32 PROTECTION FROM HARMFUL WORK</p>	<p>33 PROTECTION FROM HARMFUL DRUGS</p>	<p>34 PROTECTION FROM SEXUAL ABUSE</p>	<p>35 PREVENTION OF SALE AND TRAFFICKING</p>
<p>36 PROTECTION FROM EXPLOITATION</p>	<p>37 CHILDREN IN DETENTION</p>	<p>38 PROTECTION IN WAR</p>	<p>39 RECOVERY AND REINTEGRATION</p>	<p>40 CHILDREN WHO BREAK THE LAW</p>	<p>41 BEST LAW FOR CHILDREN APPLIES</p>	<p>42 EVERYONE MUST KNOW CHILDREN'S RIGHTS</p>

Reference: UNICEF

SUMMARY OF CHILD RIGHTS

THE MAIN CRC PROVISIONS

LIFE, DIGNITY, AND HEALTH

You have the right to life and an adequate standard of living, including housing, food, water, a clean climate, health, and healthcare.

EQUALITY AND NON-DISCRIMINATION

You have equal rights with all other children in the world, no matter your race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, language, parental politics, your own political opinion, wealth, poverty, or if you have a disability.

PARTICIPATION

You have the right to be heard and to participate in all decisions affecting you, including in court. You have the right to receive information.

IDENTITY

You have the right to a name and nationality. This is your legal identity that enables you to access all your other rights.

SAFE PLACE

You have the right to a safe place to live and to be cared for, including if you are a refugee, migrant, living on the streets, orphaned, adopted, or fostered.

PROTECTION FROM HARM

You have the right not to be tortured or to be treated in a cruel, inhuman, or degrading way. You have the right not to be subjected to mental, emotional, or physical abuse, dangerous work, forced labor, drugs, or sex trafficking.

BODILY INTEGRITY

You have the right to be protected from sexual abuse, female genital mutilation (also known as cutting), and early or forced marriage.

PROTECTION FROM ARMED VIOLENCE

You have the right to life and to be protected from war and armed conflict. If you're underage you should not be asked to fight or take part in war.

CRIMINAL JUSTICE AND LIBERTY

You have the right not to be punished in a cruel, harmful, or degrading way. You are entitled to a fair hearing and judges must consider your age and needs. You should receive support to help you recover from abuse.

PRIVACY

You have the right to privacy and to be protected from bullying, intimidation, harassment, threats, and attacks on your reputation.

MINORITY AND INDIGENOUS RIGHTS

You have the right to enjoy your own culture, practice your religion, and use your languages if you belong to a minority or Indigenous group.

EDUCATION

You have the right to information, a good education, and schooling to help develop your personality, talents, and abilities. You have the right to information and guidance. You have the right to know your rights.

PLAY

You have the right to play, rest, choose your own friends, share ideas, and enjoy the arts and culture.

FREEDOM OF THOUGHT

You have the right to your own ideas. You can choose to follow your own faith or none.

VOICE AND PEACEFUL PROTEST

You have the right to express your views and to join with others to do so, including in peaceful protest. You are entitled to seek out and receive information.

Reference: Know Your Rights and Claim Them: A Guide for Youth

ACTIVITY 2

TAKING A STANCE ON CHILD RIGHTS

Taking a stance on child rights by standing along a line.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Participants will be able to:

- discuss adult-centric statements about children from a child rights perspective.

TIMING

60 min

WHAT YOU NEED

- Enough space to have all participants stand along an imaginary line
- A flipchart or board with these five statements listed:
 1. *“Adults know everything about children because they have been children themselves.”*
 2. *“Children are not mature enough to make decisions about their own lives.”*
 3. *“Children’s opinions matter less than adults’ opinions.”*
 4. *“The experiences you have as a child don’t matter much when you become an adult.”*
 5. *“It is more important to protect adults’ rights than child rights.”*

THIS ACTIVITY HAS 4 STEPS

- | | | |
|---------------|---------------------------------|---------------|
| Step 1 | Explaining the activity | 5 min |
| Step 2 | Taking a stance on child rights | 25 min |
| Step 3 | Discussion | 20 min |
| Step 4 | Taking action | 10 min |

FACILITATION TIPS



- ☑ You can adapt this activity to include participants with disabilities or other issues. For example, you can use numbers on a scale to express degrees of agreement, 1 being ‘strongly disagree’ and 5 ‘strongly agree’.



Learners at a South African Eastern Cape school make the most of a break in their school day.

STEP 1 EXPLAINING THE ACTIVITY 5 MIN

- Ask participants to stand up and move around the room. As they walk, they should observe each other and try to keep the same distance between one another.
- After 30 seconds, ask them to stop moving and stay where they are. Point to one side of the room and call it the “I-agree side”; point to the other side and call it the “I-disagree side”. Ask participants to imagine a line connecting these two points.
- Ask volunteers to be ready to read out the five statements above in turn. Explain that after each statement participants are **going to take a stance along the line based on how much they agree or disagree with the statement.**

STEP 2 TAKING A STANCE ON CHILD RIGHTS 25 MIN

- Volunteers read out the five statements above (or choose/create other adult-centric ones).
- After each statement, give participants some time to decide how much they agree with it or not. Then ask them to stand along the imaginary line in accordance with their opinion.
- Ask participants closer to one side of the room to explain their thinking, then ask other those closer to the opposite side, and finally some in the middle.
- After those who want to have spoken, invite people to move up or down along the line if their position about the statement has changed.

STEP 3 DISCUSSION 20 MIN

- Ask participants to return to their seats.
- Invite them to share how they felt doing this exercise.
 1. **Did some of the statements make them angry, and if so why?**
 2. **Have they heard similar statements before, for example, at home or at school?**
 3. **How did it feel listening to different opinions?**
- Then reveal the list of five written statements. Read out the five statements and make some comments, for example:
 1. ***“Adults know everything about children because they have been children themselves.”***
 - ▶ Technological change, climate change and other factors mean that children’s realities today are very different from those adults experienced during their own childhoods.
 - ▶ As we grow older our sense of self changes, which can make it difficult for adults to put themselves in children’s shoes.
 2. ***“Children are not mature enough to make decisions about their own lives.”***
 - ▶ Children are not their parents’ property, nor objects that only need protection. They are human beings and individuals with their own lives.
 - ▶ Child participation is therefore an important child rights principle. Children should be able to contribute to decisions affecting their lives, according to their age and maturity (we call this the “evolving capacities of the child”).

3. ***“Children’s opinions matter less than adults’ opinions.”***

- ▶ Children have unique needs and perspectives that adults often aren’t aware of.
- ▶ Adults often have specific experiences and biases, so children can provide a fresh perspective. This can help adults better understand children’s realities, motivations and intentions.

4. ***“The experiences you have as a child don’t matter much when you become an adult.”***

- ▶ Children’s bodies and minds are evolving fast. If they are denied, for example, education or food during their childhoods, this can affect how healthy and fulfilled they will be when they grow up.

5. ***“It is more important to protect adults’ rights than child rights.”***

- ▶ Children’s and adults’ rights are equally important. Some rights are specific to children, like the right to play; to not be separated from their families; and to be cared for if their family can’t do it.

- **Finally**, explain that this activity introduces a term call *adult-centrism*. This is the idea that adults’ perspectives, experiences and needs are more important or valuable than those of children or young people. In an **adult-centric** view, adults’ opinions and ways of thinking might shape decisions, rules or environments, often overlooking or undervaluing how children feel or think. This feeds harmful stereotypes about children and is used by adults, often unconsciously, to justify them holding more power than children in society.

- In simpler terms, adult-centrism involves planning or deciding things mainly with adults in mind, instead of considering children’s unique needs and perspectives equally. This can sometimes make children feel that their voices aren’t heard or that what they need is less important.

STEP 4 TAKING ACTION

10 MIN

- Discuss with participants how they might raise awareness of adult-centrism and child rights in constructive and safe ways. For example, by creating a comic book, posters or mural representing the statements they worked on.
- It could be a positive next step to focus on what the opposite of these statements could be, e.g. flipping them to focus on child rights being equally important and what they want people to know.



A mural in the schoolyard of a school for Syrian refugee children in Kilis, Turkey. The words say “Thank you Turkey” in Turkish and Arabic.

© Amnesty International/Anna Shea

ACTIVITY 3: ACT IT OUT!

Group sketches acting out each of the four child rights principles.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Participants will be able to:

- name the four child rights principles;
- explain why these principles are important for children.

TIMING

60 min

WHAT YOU NEED

- Enough space for four groups to rehearse their sketch
- A flipchart or board
- Four child rights principle cards, cut out from one copy of Handout B page 25.

THIS ACTIVITY HAS 4 STEPS

- | | | |
|---------------|---------------------------|---------------|
| Step 1 | Explaining and setting up | 5 min |
| Step 2 | Creating and rehearsing | 20 min |
| Step 3 | Presenting and discussing | 20 min |
| Step 4 | Debriefing | 15 min |



Participants play roles during a workshop at Amnesty Algeria's Annual Youth Camp.

STEP 1 EXPLAINING AND SETTING UP 5 MIN

- Tell participants that this activity is about the CRC's four child rights principles. The CRC includes all children's rights that almost all countries have promised to make a reality. The four principles are rights that help to make sense of all the other rights.
- Explain that participants will be divided into four groups which will be given a principle each. They will imagine a situation where this principle is either being respected, or not. They can then create a short (max. 3-minute-long) sketch and rehearse acting it out. Finally, each group will perform their sketch for the others, who will be invited to guess the principle.

◆ **Optional alternative:** Each group draws one of the principles (cut out from the copy of Handout B, page 25), without showing it to the others.

STEP 2 CREATING AND REHEARSING 20 MIN

- Each group reads their principle and brainstorms a max. 3-minute-long sketch showing how it is being respected, or not. Each group member is given a role to play.
- Groups rehearse their sketch/create their drawing and fine tune it to make it as relevant to the principle as possible.

STEP 3 PRESENTING AND DISCUSSING 20 MIN

- Each group performs their sketch for the others or presents their drawing. At the end of each presentation, ask the audience to recount the story they saw, and to guess what the principle might be (3 min). Then ask the group that just performed to reveal their principle and what it means.

STEP 4 DEBRIEFING 15 MIN

- In a plenary, ask participants how they felt doing this exercise:
 1. **How did you feel doing the exercise?**
 2. **Was it easy to guess? Why?**
 3. **Why do you think these principles are important for children? (Non-discrimination, Best interests, Participation, Survival and Development)**



Girls drawing in a workshop organized by AI Chile to raise awareness about the recruitment of children by armed groups during Colombia's internal armed conflict, 2008.

HANDOUT B

FOUR CHILD RIGHTS PRINCIPLES CARDS

1. NON-DISCRIMINATION

All children have the same rights and should be treated equally.

It is forbidden to treat a child unfairly because of who they are, for instance because of their race, gender, religion, nationality, disability, etc.



2. BEST INTERESTS

Adults should think about children's best interests when making choices that affect them.

This is especially important for younger children and when deciding who should take care of the child.



3. PARTICIPATION

Children have the right to express their views, be listened to and taken seriously.

They should be able to contribute to decisions affecting their lives, according to their age and maturity.



4. SURVIVAL AND DEVELOPMENT

Children should be able to survive their childhood and develop to their full potential.

They should grow up in conditions that don't damage their physical and mental wellbeing.





As a girl Zahiya (centre) would not have been allowed to play football in Syria. After her family fled the conflict and settled in Toronto, Canada, she can play in the park with her brothers Majed and Moutayam.

CHILD RIGHTS IN PRACTICE

This section focuses on child rights in practice, in particular on how access to rights varies for different children.

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ACTIVITY 5: RIGHTS STORY CIRCLE	37
ACTIVITY 6: CHILD RIGHTS AT RISK	40

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Participants will be able to:

- recognize the multiples layers of identity and the diversity all around us;
- discuss how our diversity can be better respected and celebrated;
- identify barriers to accessing rights for certain children;
- analyze a situation where child rights are denied;
- illustrate different children's unequal access to their rights.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

GLOBAL CHALLENGES TO CHILD RIGHTS

Child rights are violated every day. Children are especially exposed to rights violations because they are dependent on adults. They are often at the highest risk of poverty, malnourishment and abuse, and disproportionately impacted by human rights crises.

As highlighted by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and other international child rights mandates and bodies,¹ challenges to child rights globally reflect gaps in the implementation of international law obligations around the world – also against the backdrop of pandemics, complex humanitarian emergencies, and extreme weather events/climate-related crises such as:

- **Wars and conflicts:** One in six children – or about 400 million – live in areas with armed conflict. Countless children have been killed, disabled or orphaned in conflicts. Others have been recruited by security forces and armed opposition groups. At least 36.5 million children are displaced from their homes – the highest number ever recorded.²
- **Climate change:** About 1 billion children live in countries that are extremely vulnerable to the effects of climate change.³ Related food insecurity, climate anxiety and traumatizing events can have a profound impact on children, altering their brains and body development and potentially diminishing what they can achieve in life.⁴
- **Environmental degradation:** More than one in every four deaths of children aged below five is related to environmental risks. 93% of all children live in environments with air pollution levels above the World Health Organization (WHO) guidelines, which impacts on their right to health.⁵
- **Pandemics and epidemics** (like COVID-19, Ebola, Zika, HIV/AIDS, etc.): In addition to their direct health impacts on children, these can result in children becoming orphaned or having to work to support their families.⁶
- **Poverty:** Some countries experience greater levels of poverty, which puts children at higher risk of domestic violence, child labour, sexual exploitation, teenage pregnancy and child marriage. It also limits their government’s capacity to grant their rights, in particular social and economic rights.
- **Education:** About 258 million children and young people are out of school. This includes 59 million children of primary school age, 62 million of lower secondary school age and 138 million of upper secondary age.⁷
- **Violence:** More than a billion children around the world have experienced emotional, physical or sexual violence, with damaging consequences for all aspects of their rights.⁸ This includes violent discipline by caregivers, such as psychological aggression and physical punishment.

1 <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2022/10/children-have-specific-rights-and-should-be-protected-all-times-un-experts> (2022).
 2 <https://www.unicef.org/media/131491/file/%20Humanitarian%20Action%20for%20Children%202023.pdf> (2023).
 3 <https://www.unicef.org/media/131491/file/%20Humanitarian%20Action%20for%20Children%202023.pdf> (2023).
 4 <https://hdr.undp.org/content/human-development-report-2021-22> (2022).
 5 <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-CED-PHE-18-01> (2018).
 6 <https://www.unicef.org/innocenti/media/6131/file/UNICEF-Impacts-Pandemics-Child-Protection-2020.pdf> (2020).
 7 UNESCO Institute for Statistics (2018).
 8 <https://www.unicef.org/sites/default/files/2020-06/Global-status-report-on-preventing-violence-against-children-2020.pdf> (2020).

- **Lack of birth registration:** An estimated 290 million children have not had their births registered, leaving them without a legal identity. This can make it nearly impossible for them to claim their rights throughout their lives.⁹

- **Treatment as adults:** In certain politically sensitive domains, such as national security, counterterrorism and criminal justice, children above a certain age can be treated as adults or ‘young’ adults, thereby not accessing the protections they are entitled to as children.¹⁰

- **Immigration detention:** At least 330,000 children are held in immigration detention in 80 countries every year, simply for being migrants or refugees. Many are forcibly separated from their parents and families.¹¹

- **Gender norms:** For example, more than 200 million girls and women have been subjected to female genital mutilation in 30 countries worldwide.

More than half of these cases have occurred in just three countries: Indonesia, Egypt and Ethiopia.

- Children of diverse sexual orientation, gender identity or gender expression, including trans and non-binary children, are also routinely subjected to discrimination and violence throughout the world.

- **Obstacles to realizing parents’ or caregivers’ rights:** When the rights of children’s parents or caregivers are not realized, this has consequences for children’s rights too (e.g. parents’ lack of housing influences children’s own right to housing).

- **Lack of appropriate legislation and policies:** For example, only 13% of the world’s children are fully protected in law from all corporal punishment.

Schoolgirls participated in peaceful protests during the uprising that has swept Iran in September 2022, including by removing their mandatory hijabs while in their school uniforms.



© Private

9 <https://www.unicef.org/media/62981/file/Birth-registration-for-every-child-by-2030.pdf> (2019).

10 <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2022/10/children-have-specific-rights-and-should-be-protected-all-times-un-experts> (2022).

11 <https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3813850?ln=en&v=pdf> (2019).

INEQUALITIES IN CHILD RIGHTS BETWEEN COUNTRIES

As these different examples show, challenges to child rights globally differ greatly between regions. Regions in the Global South, where most low- and middle-income countries are located, tend to have greater challenges to child rights. However, this is only a general trend, as some individual countries in the Global North might have greater challenges to child rights than others in the Global South.

A striking example of inequalities in child rights between countries is child mortality. Children born in the world's poorest countries still have a 1 in 10 risk of not living past their fifth birthday, whereas almost all children born in rich countries survive beyond their fifth birthday.¹²

Inequalities in child rights between countries are correlated with differences in socio-economic development between Global South and Global North regions. This is the result of historical, economic and political factors, which have created an uneven distribution of resources, opportunities and power:

- European colonialism has led to the extraction of resources and the transfer of wealth from the Global South to the Global North. Colonial powers also imposed systems hindering the socio-economic development of colonized countries, with effects felt to this day.
- The current global economic system benefits Global North countries at the expense of Global South countries through policies such as unequal trade agreements, intellectual property rights, and international financial institutions that prioritize the interests of Global North countries.

- Poor infrastructure, lack of investment, corruption, political instability and a debt crisis all contribute to a vicious cycle of poverty and underdevelopment, making it difficult for many Global South countries to break out of poverty and develop socio-economically.

INEQUALITIES IN CHILD RIGHTS WITHIN COUNTRIES

Inequalities in child rights exist not only between but also within countries. In a given country, not all children can access their rights on an equal footing. This is because children belong to different groups that hold more or less power in society on the basis of categories such as race, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, nationality, ability, etc. These categories form the different layers of children's identities.

Each part of a child's identity is either in the majority or minority within their community. Minority identities are often less represented and may face negative stereotypes. In contrast, majority identities are more common and tend to be seen as the "norm," so they are rarely questioned or explained.

Minority groups hold minority status as a result of systemic oppressions, such as sexism and racism, which systematically disadvantages them through laws, policies and cultural norms. Systemic oppression leads to their marginalization, namely their exclusion from participating as equal members of society. In terms of child rights, this means that children from minority groups tend to enjoy their rights to a lesser extent than children from majority groups.

12 <https://hdr.undp.org/content/human-development-report-2021-22> (2022).

Discrimination is a contributing factor to systemic oppression. It is a prohibited conduct in human rights law that involves treating minority groups less favourably or causing them harm because of their identity.

Discrimination can be:

- **an act or an omission;**
- **intentional or unintentional;**
- **overt or covert;**
- **direct or indirect.**

Direct discrimination against children occurs when they are treated less favorably than others in a similar situation because of specific parts of their identities (referred to as “protected grounds,” “protected characteristics,” or “grounds for discrimination” in human rights law). This can also happen when children are put at a disadvantage because of one or more aspects of their identities.

Indirect discrimination involves applying rules that appear neutral but have disproportionate impacts on children of particular identities. For example, a rule prohibiting head coverings in school may disadvantage some Muslim girls or others that wear head coverings. While direct discrimination involves less favourable treatment on the basis of particular identities, indirect discrimination thus involves identical treatment, but with less favourable consequences for certain identities.¹³ Algorithmic discrimination is mentioned in section 4 under “other digital risks” (page 62).

Discrimination is prohibited by CRC *Article 2* and most human rights instruments. As explained previously (see Content of the Convention, page 13), non-discrimination is also one of the four child rights

principles guiding the interpretation of the whole Convention. The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child has already identified more than 60 grounds for discrimination against children.¹⁴

Children specifically often experience discrimination intersectionally, on the basis of age as well as other aspects of their identities. Intersectional discrimination occurs when children are treated less favourably because of two or more aspects of their identities. It is based on a combination of grounds that interact with each other in a way that produces distinct and specific discrimination. For instance, the example of a rule prohibiting head coverings in school could lead to the intersectional discrimination of Muslim girls on the triple basis of age, gender and religion.

Addressing the systemic oppression of children, including their discrimination and marginalization, is essential to ensure greater equality between children in accessing their rights. One step towards it is to recognize the inherent value of all children and celebrate their diversity. Whatever their identity, all children have the right to enjoy their culture, practice their religion and use their language (CRC Article 30).

13 https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/documents/publications/2022-11-28/OHCHR_ERT_Protecting_Minority%20Rights_Practical_Guide_web.pdf (2023).

14 <https://www.unicef.org/reports/implementation-handbook-convention-rights-child> (2007).

COUNTRY-SPECIFIC INFORMATION ON CHILD RIGHTS

Country-specific information on child rights can be found online:

- The United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child [periodically reviews](#) the realisation of child rights in every country (except the USA, which has not yet ratified the Convention.(Under ‘State parties reporting’, select the country of your choice. Reports by the Committee are called ‘Concluding observations’; information from civil society organisations can also be found here.)
- The Universal Periodic [Review](#) is a UN mechanism which reviews the human rights situation of all countries, including child rights. (Click on the country and then the language of your choice next to ‘Summary of stakeholders’ information’. You can then research the keyword “child” in the document. Reports by civil society organisations can be found by clicking on the index number next to ‘Summary of stakeholders’ information’.)
- UNICEF publishes data on every country on its [website](#).

Welsh children Amy, Jaime, Kane and Jamie were aged between eleven and fourteen when they began to fight discrimination in 2019. The girls have additional learning needs and the boys are wheelchair users. They faced frequent verbal abuse and found it hard to move around because of many obstacles in the way, such as cars parked on pavements.



© Celine Smyth, Swansea University

ACTIVITY 4 DIVERSITY BINGO

Recognising diversity among different participants.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Participants will be able to:

- recognize the multiple layers of identity and the diversity all around us;
- discuss how our diversity can be better respected and celebrated.

TIMING

60 min

WHAT YOU NEED

- Enough space for participants to move around
- Copies of the Diversity Bingo worksheet for each participant: Handout C page 36.

THIS ACTIVITY HAS 5 STEPS

- | | | |
|---------------|---------------------------------|---------------|
| Step 1 | Introduction | 5 min |
| Step 2 | Bingo game | 15 min |
| Step 3 | Group reflection | 15 min |
| Step 4 | Linking to rights and inclusion | 10 min |
| Step 5 | Taking action | 15 min |

FACILITATION TIP



- ☑ Consider how to adapt the bingo cards to suit your specific context and participants.



© Briel Calderon

Students in Bangkok strike and demonstrate to support the Youth Strike 4 Climate movement (also known as Fridays for Future and Youth for Climate). Students demand that politicians act urgently to prevent further global warming and climate change.

STEP 1 INTRODUCTION 5 MIN

- Begin by explaining that diversity means we are all unique, and that it therefore makes each of us special.
- Connect diversity to child rights, especially the right to be respected and included. Emphasize that everyone has the right to feel welcome and valued for who they are.

STEP 2 BINGO GAME 15 MIN

- Distribute the bingo cards and explain the rules:
 - ▶ Find different people in the group who match each square's description.
 - ▶ Write those people's names in the squares.
 - ▶ Aim to fill five squares in a row or diagonal, then shout "bingo!".
- Encourage participants to chat and learn new things about each other as they fill out their cards.

STEP 3 GROUP REFLECTION 15 MIN

- Bring the group back together for a discussion:
 1. **What did you learn that surprised you?**
 2. **How does it feel to learn about each person's unique background?**
 3. **How is diversity reflected in their community?**
 4. **Why do you think it is important to respect everyone's uniqueness?**

STEP 4 LINKING TO RIGHTS AND INCLUSION 10 MIN

- Ask questions to help participants connect diversity with their rights:
 1. **Do you think everyone feels that their unique traits are respected and celebrated? Why/not?**
 2. **Why is the right to be yourself important?**
- Highlight the **right to non-discrimination** and the **right to be respected and included** (CRC Articles 2 and 3). Explain that every child has the right to be proud of their identity and to feel safe sharing it with others.

STEP 5 TAKING ACTION 15 MIN

- Have participants sit in a circle and share one new thing they learned from the activity or one way they could be more inclusive.
- Encourage them to think of ways to include or celebrate others in their everyday lives, linking back to their right to be heard and respected.
- Invite participants to share some answers and what lessons they could draw from it.
- Highlight that while all questions were linked to participants' lives, some were more personal than others and could relate to their "identity":

Identity refers to the different ways in which children define themselves and are defined by others in society based on factors such as race, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, ability, etc.

- Note that identity has multiple layers and that children with different identities can still share certain aspects of their identities, whether they are visible or not. This all contributes to the diversity that is all around us.
- Note that all identities don't hold the same status in society, with some enjoying a higher status than others. This might be why some questions or answers were easier to ask or answer than others. Yet all children have the same rights, regardless of their identity (CRC Article 2).
- Note that diversity should be respected and celebrated. Whatever their identity, all children have the right to enjoy their culture, practice their religion and use their language (CRC Article 30).
- Discuss with participants possible ways in which diversity within their class or group could be better respected and celebrated.

A classroom in a container school for Roma children in Slovakia.



HANDOUT C

DIVERSITY BINGO WORKSHEET

Speaks more than one language	Has visited another country or has family in other places	Has a unique family tradition	Has a special skill or talent (e.g., drawing, dancing)	Prefers spending time alone sometimes (introvert)
Knows a traditional song or dance	Is passionate about protecting the environment or animal rights	Likes music (what kind?)	Feels connected to nature or enjoys spending time outdoors	Is an only child or has many siblings
Has a relative or friend from a different country	Thinks everyone should be treated equally and fairly	Wears glasses or contacts	Knows a saying or phrase in another language	Enjoys reading books or comics
Plays a musical instrument or sings	Knows someone who lives with a disability	Knows a recipe for a family dish	Enjoys sports or physical activities	Has shared a room with siblings or family members
Has participated in a cultural or religious ceremony	Enjoys helping others and being supportive	Know someone who identifies as LGBTQ+	Someone who comes from a different background than you or your family (religion, culture, place)	Lives in a multi-generational household (e.g., with grandparents) or a single parent household

ACTIVITY 5

RIGHTS STORY CIRCLE

Exploring how identity can affect children's access to their rights.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Participants will be able to:

- understand how children with diverse identities face challenges in accessing their rights;
- analyze how identity impacts on our experiences, and explore how to overcome challenges related to child rights;
- express their understanding and perspectives through storytelling and art.

TIMING

60 min

WHAT YOU NEED

- Scenario cards (with intersectional identities and challenges) Handout D – page 39.
- Blank paper and art supplies for drawing

THIS ACTIVITY HAS 4 STEPS

- | | | |
|---------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| Step 1 | Introduce the scenarios | 5 min |
| Step 2 | Create a story | 25 min |
| Step 3 | Share and Reflect | 20 min |
| Step 4 | Take Action | 10 min |

FACILITATION TIPS



- ☑ Before starting the activity, inform the children that some scenarios may feature challenging themes related to identity, rights and discrimination. Let them know it's okay to step away or share any discomfort they may feel during discussions.
- ☑ Create a supportive atmosphere where children feel safe sharing their ideas. Encourage respect and active listening during discussions. Monitor the group's reactions and be ready to offer support if any child appears upset or triggered. Allow participants to opt out of certain discussions if they feel uncomfortable.
- ☑ The scenario cards suggested can be adapted to participants' own context.



Children sit for class in a primary school in Borno State, Nigeria.

© Mohammed Abdulsamad / The Walking Paradox

STEP 1 INTRODUCE THE SCENARIOS **5 MIN**

- Divide the children into small groups of 4-6. Each group will work together on their story. Provide each group with a set of scenario cards, ensuring each card describes a different identity and specific challenge related to rights.
- Explain that the groups should discuss the scenario and brainstorm together to create a story about the challenges that this child could face in accessing their rights and also ways of overcoming it.
- Encourage participants to focus on the character's strengths and resilience. Remind students to avoid caricatures or negative stereotypes in their storytelling. Encourage them to portray characters as multifaceted individuals.

STEP 2 CREATE A STORY **25 MIN**

- In small groups, participants discuss their scenario and brainstorm together to create a story. They should think about:
 - ▶ the main character's feelings and experiences;
 - ▶ what challenges and obstacles they face;
 - ▶ how the character could advocate for their rights;
 - ▶ who might help the character in their journey.
- They can decide how they want to share their story in a creative way (e.g. role play, drawing, song, etc.).

STEP 3 SHARE AND REFLECT **20 MIN**

- Invite each group to present their story to the others.
- After each presentation, facilitate a discussion about the challenges faced by the characters. Encourage questions such as:
 3. **What did you learn about the character's identity?**
 4. **How can we support people facing similar challenges?**
 5. **What actions can we take to advocate for their rights?**
- Conclude by highlighting that:

Identity refers to the different ways in which children define themselves and are defined by others in society based on factors such as race, class, gender, sexual orientation, religion, ability, etc.

- ▶ Note that identity has multiples layers and that children with different identities can still share certain aspects of their identities, whether these are visible or not. This all contributes to the diversity that is all around us.
- ▶ Note that not all identities hold the same status in society, and that some enjoy a higher status than others. This might be why some questions or answers were easier to ask or answer than others. Yet all children have the same rights, regardless of their identity (CRC Article 2)

STEP 4 TAKE ACTION **10 MIN**

- In conclusion, ask the participants if they identified any actions in the discussion that they could take forward.

HANDOUT D SCENARIO CARDS

SCENARIOS

A girl with a disability struggles to get to school because she lacks accessible transportation.



An immigrant boy from a low-income family can't access healthcare services because he can't speak the language.



A non-binary teenager feels unsafe at school and isn't allowed to use a bathroom that aligns with their gender identity.



A refugee girl from a traditional Muslim family fears discrimination and harassment when trying to join a local youth program.



A child, who is a person of colour from a single parent family, experiences bullying in school.



ACTIVITY 6

CHILD RIGHTS AT RISK

Identifying and researching which child rights are at risk in schools, communities and beyond.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Participants will be able to:

- identify and analyze a situation where children are denied their rights;
- illustrate how different children might experience unequal access to their rights.

TIMING

60 min

WHAT YOU NEED

- Pen and paper or a computer for writing
- If available: internet access to search the web
- If groups have no pre-existing knowledge of child rights, copies of Handout A (pages 18 and 19) for each group

THIS ACTIVITY HAS 3 STEPS

- | | | |
|---------------|-------------------------|---------------|
| Step 1 | Explaining the activity | 10 min |
| Step 2 | Group work | 30 min |
| Step 3 | Discussion | 20 min |

FACILITATION TIPS



- ☑ *Encourage using the internet to search for information, but if this isn't available or practical participants can also use their own personal experiences, and ask their teachers, community leaders, other children and adults to find out what child rights are at risk in their school, community, country and beyond.*
- ☑ *This activity can be adapted to participants' experience, age and context:*
- ☑ *For younger or less experienced participants, suggest a few topics they can research and distribute a simplified version of the CRC ([Handout A](#)).*
- ☑ *Encourage older or more experienced participants to research an issue highlighted by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in their country [here](#). (They can look under 'states parties reporting', select country and 'concluding observations' as document type – NB! The USA is not listed as it has not yet ratified the Convention).*
- ☑ *This activity can be completed outside of the classroom.*
- ☑ *This activity is good preparation for Activity 8: Take action! (page 52).*

STEP 1 EXPLAINING THE ACTIVITY 10 MIN

- Divide participants into groups of four. Explain that they will explore child rights issues around them guided by the following questions:

1. **What child right is being affected?**
2. **Where is this happening (school, community, country)?**
3. **Who is most affected by this issue?**
4. **Who can help fix this problem?**

STEP 2 GROUP WORK 30 MIN

- In groups of four, ask participants to pick a child rights problem they see around them and explore the following:

Research or reflect:

- ▶ If they have internet access, find three facts or statistics about their chosen issue.
- ▶ If not, think of three reasons why this right is at risk based on personal experiences or conversations with teachers or friends.

Identify responsibility:

- ▶ Discuss who is responsible for addressing this issue (e.g., teachers, parents, community leaders, etc.).

Explore solutions

- ▶ Brainstorm ideas about what could be done to improve the situation.

STEP 3 DISCUSSION 20 MIN

- In plenary, ask participants the following questions:

1. **Which rights did they identify?**
2. **How did they feel during the activity?**
3. **Was it easy to find information?**
4. **Were there any surprising facts?**
5. **Share one interesting fact with the group.**
6. **Discuss potential actions they could take to address the issue.**



Women and children at a refuge for Colombian migrants near the Venezuelan border provides shelter, 2015.

© Juan Pablo Cohen – La Opinión



Zulaikha Patel, a South African anti-racism activist, became a symbol of the fight against Pretoria Girls High School's policy regarding black girls' hair in 2016, at the age of 13 – see case page 48.

CLAIMING CHILD RIGHTS

This section focuses how children themselves can claim, promote and defend their rights.

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LEARNING OUTCOMES

Participants will be able to:

- illustrate the children's capacity to stand up for their rights;
- compare strategies used by child human rights defenders;
- describe a rights-respecting world for children and identify at least one step leading to it;
- name actors that have influence on child rights;
- identify concrete actions that can be taken to improve a child rights problem.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

As explained in the previous section (see Background information: Child rights in practice, page 29), while child rights are almost universally recognized, there is still a long way to go before they are effectively realized for all children. This is why children's efforts to claim their rights is essential.

The CRC provides for children's right to do so as a conjunction of three rights: their rights to express their views and have them given due weight (*Article 12*); to freedom of expression (*Article 13*); and to freedom of association and peaceful assembly (*Article 15*).

CHILD HUMAN RIGHTS DEFENDERS

Throughout the world, children are taking action to claim their rights, fight injustices and make a positive change in their schools, community, towns and other parts of society. They are addressing various issues, such as the climate, the environment, gender equality, racial equality and equal and fair access to education. The book *Know Your Rights and Claim Them: A Guide for Youth*, a collaboration between Angelina Jolie and Amnesty International, presents several case studies about child human rights defenders.

Child human rights defenders are also organizing within their different countries. For instance, in the UK, the Children's Human Rights Network¹⁵ is an activist-led group of over 10,000 children working together to drive change.

The UN Declaration on Human Rights Defenders recognizes everyone's right – including children – to strive for the protection and realization of human rights. It also sets out governments' responsibility to protect human rights defenders against any forms of threats, violence, discrimination or retaliation because of their activism.¹⁶

Yet many human rights defenders, including children, face a hostile environment. They can be subjected to harassment and violence, demonization, police repression, restrictive laws or other obstacles.

In response to this, Amnesty International has launched Protect the Protest¹⁷, a global campaign that confronts the unprecedented worldwide threat to the right to protest.

The organization also offers a [free online course on the right to protest](#) through its Human Rights Academy. The course presents different forms of protests, protestors' rights, governments' duties in the context of protests, and offers tips for protesting safely and for supporting protests.



© Iván Martínez / Amnesty International

Ecuadorian activist, Denisse, is a 15-year-old student. She joined a lawsuit against the gas flares operations in her local area to feel “the peace of mind that they are not going to continue doing the damage they are doing to people's health.”

15 <https://www.amnesty.org.uk/Childrensnetwork>

16 <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/declaration-right-and-responsibility-individuals-groups-and> (1998).

17 <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/07/protect-the-protest/>

HOW TO CLAIM CHILD RIGHTS

Protest is one way, but not the only way, children can claim their rights. Activity 9 (page 52) provides useful guidance, including:

- a list of different actions children can take, such as raising awareness, campaigning, fundraising, and changing their personal behaviour;
- a list of ideas for concrete actions, such as signing a petition, creating a performance and selling cakes to raise money;
- concrete steps children can take to plan their action, such as identifying a child rights problem and actors that have influence over it.

Identifying actors that influence a child rights problem is particularly important because child rights impose **three obligations** on duty bearers, primarily government authorities. These obligations involve **respecting, protecting** and **fulfilling** child rights in the following ways:

- Authorities must **respect** child rights, which means not infringing directly on them. For instance, they should not unduly prevent children from attending a peaceful protest.
- Authorities must **protect** child rights, which means ensuring that no third party infringes on them. For instance, they should ensure that children are not subjected to violence by a family member.
- Authorities must **fulfil** child rights, which means taking positive measures to realize them. For instance, they should build schools and train teachers so children can access education.

Claiming child rights often involves putting pressure on authorities – either directly or indirectly – to take specific **measures**. These can include the following:

- creating laws and policies enabling children to access their rights in their family, at school, online, etc.;
- supporting parents and caregivers to carry out their responsibilities;
- informing children about their rights;
- ensuring that children (and their parents or caregivers) can complain when their rights are not respected.

WHEN TO CLAIM CHILD RIGHTS

Child rights can be claimed every day of the year. However, certain days offer a particular opportunity, for instance by receiving greater media attention. These include:

- International Day of Innocent Children Victims of Aggression (4 June)
- World Day Against Child Labour (12 June)
- International Day of the African Child (16 June)
- International Day of the Girl Child (11 October)
- World Children’s Day (20 November)
- World Children’s Day commemorates the adoption of the CRC on 20 November 1989.

International Day of the African Child commemorates the children who stood up to claim their rights in 1976, during South Africa’s Apartheid era. Around 10,000 Black school children marched together in a long column through Soweto, a poor township in the city of Johannesburg. They protested against the poor quality of their education and demanded their right to be taught in their own language. The police responded by shooting hundreds of people, including children, in a gross violation of their rights.

ACTIVITY 7 CHILDREN'S POWER

Riddle game about child human rights defenders' challenges and achievements.¹⁸

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Participants will be able to:

- illustrate children's ability to stand up for their rights;
- compare strategies used by child human rights defenders.

TIMING

60 min for the reduced activity/**90 min** for the full activity

WHAT YOU NEED

- Handout E (pages 48 and 49): Narrator's sheets with stories of child human rights defenders (one or two per group).

THIS ACTIVITY HAS 3 STEPS

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|---------------|
| Step 1 Explanation and setup | 10 min |
| Step 2 Guessing story | 35 min |
| Step 3 Debriefing | 15 min |

FACILITATION TIPS



- ☑ Ideally, this activity would require 90 min to allow for two rounds and for teams to switch side. If you only have 60 min available, the activity can be completed after one round.



© AHMAD SAHEL ARMAN/AFP via Getty Images

Afghan women and girls take part in a protest in front of the Ministry of Education in Kabul, Afghanistan, demanding that high schools be reopened for girls, 2022.

18 Inspired by the game Observers (Demogames project: <https://demogames.eu>)

STEP 1 EXPLANATION AND SETUP 10 MIN

- Explain that participants will learn about real stories of child human rights defenders through a guessing game. Form groups of four. Within each group, create two pairs. Each pair decides which role to take first: Narrators or Players.
- Give each participant a folded narrator's sheet with a one story. Emphasize that they should not look at it yet!
- Explain that the Player team's goal is to uncover three key details about the story by asking questions. The Narrator team can only respond with "yes" or "no".

STEP 2 GUESSING THE STORY 35 MIN

Preparation 5 min

- ▶ The Narrator team unfolds their sheet to read the story and identifies three key details to share (NB! These are not the same as tips.).
- ▶ They should then write these details at the top of their sheet.
- ▶ The Player team discusses what questions they want to ask of the Narrators.

Questioning 15 min

- ▶ The Narrator team answers Player team questions with "yes" or "no" until the Players identify the three key details.
- ▶ If stuck, Players can ask for up to three hints.

Discussion 15 min

- ▶ After guessing, within the group discuss the story using guided questions from the Narrator sheet.

Optional second round (30 min)

- ▶ If time allows, switch roles and repeat the activity with a new story.

STEP 3 DEBRIEFING 15 MIN

- In plenary, ask participants the following questions:
 1. How did it feel to be a Narrator vs. a Player?
 2. What did you learn from the stories?
 3. How can children claim their rights and fight injustices?
 4. What challenges do child human rights defenders face, and how can we support them?



Children in Togo take part in Amnesty's annual Write for Rights action, which mobilises its members, supporters and sympathisers around the world to act for human rights.

HANDOUT E NARRATOR SHEETS

STORY 1 STUDENTS MARCH AGAINST RACIST AND SEXIST HAIR POLICY

Tips (if asked): Discrimination, education, campaign.



Key information 1: _____

Key information 2: _____

Key information 3: _____

WHAT HAPPENED?

In 2016, when Zulaikha Patel was 13, she and other Black school students in South Africa marched against Pretoria High School for its racist and sexist hair policy.

WHY WERE THE STUDENTS PROTESTING?

The school had instructed students to 'fix' or chemically straighten their hair and had enforced its rules using racist language.

The school also banned African languages and did not allow Black girls to gather in groups of more than four.

HOW DID THE SCHOOL INITIALLY REACT TO THE PROTEST?

The school hired private security guards armed with AK-47 rifles and dogs to disperse the demonstration. Zulaikha and other protesters refused to comply with them, which led to a collective standoff.

WHAT WAS THE IMPACT OF THE PROTEST?

The protest inspired solidarity actions at other schools. The hashtag #StopRacismAtPretoriaGirlsHigh was used over 150,000 times on social media. An online petition received almost 25,000 signatures in one day and a government minister visited the school. Finally, the regional Department of Education suspended the hair policy. The protestors won.

WHAT WAS THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT?

Apartheid was a system of institutionalised racial segregation in South Africa that lasted from 1948 until the early 1990s. It gave power to the country's minority white population. The protest highlighted how deep racist discrimination still is in South Africa.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. Which rights were the children directly denied because of the policy? What was the potential indirect impact on students' other rights?
2. What actions did the students take to push the authorities to suspend the hair policy? How did the children in this story use their power to make change?
3. How does this situation relate to the situation in your country?

HANDOUT E

NARRATOR'S SHEETS

STORY 2

HELPING OTHER REFUGEES GET A NATIONALITY AND EDUCATION

Tips (if asked): Poverty, identity, knowledge.

Key information 1: _____

Key information 2: _____

Key information 3: _____

WHAT IS HER FAMILY'S STORY?

Francia Simon's parents fled poverty and violence in Haiti long before she was born. Along with many other refugees, they went to live in the neighbouring Dominican Republic. Francia grew up in a very poor village and like many other refugee families from Haiti, her family had no official visas to legally stay.

fought to improve other children's situations, going from door to door to tell people about their rights.

She said about these experiences: "Because of my age and small size, they thought they could just send me away, a chiquita (little girl in Spanish) like me. But I wasn't intimidated, I put on a serious, almost angry face, and asked for an appointment."

OBSTACLES TO ACCESS EDUCATION

Francia did not have a birth certificate so when it was time for her to go to secondary school, she couldn't enrol. Luckily, after an aunt in Dominican Republic was able to register her, Francia received her birth certificate and could continue her education.

In 2010, when Francia was 16, she won the International Children's Peace Prize for her work.

HELPING OTHERS

Once Francia learned that every child is entitled to an identity, including a name and nationality, she decided to use her knowledge and energy to help others obtain their birth certificates. In that way, she could help others to get an education.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS:

1. **The CRC recognizes children's right to be registered after birth and to have a name and a nationality. Why do you think this is important?**
2. **What strategies did Francia use to help other refugee children? Why did it work?**
3. **How does this situation compare to the situation in your country?**

Since then, Francia has helped more than 900 children get their birth certificates. She has guided them through this complex application process and accompanied them to the authorities. She has also

ACTIVITY 8 DREAM BIG, NOW!

Imagining a world where all children's rights are realized.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Participants will be able to:

- describe a rights-respecting world for children;
- identify at least one step leading to it.

TIMING

60 min

WHAT YOU NEED

- Large sheets of paper and colour markers or crayons

THIS ACTIVITY HAS 4 STEPS

Step 1 Visualization

5 min

Step 2 Creation

20 min

Step 3 Discussion

20 min

Step 4 Actions

15 min



© Juan Pablo Cohen – La Opinión

People queue at a security barrier at the Simon Bolivar international bridge on the Venezuela/Colombia border.

STEP 1 VISUALIZATION 5 MIN

- Tell participants that this activity is about imagining a world where children can enjoy all of their rights, realizing their full potential in harmony with their environment.
- Invite participants to sit in a circle and either close their eyes if they feel comfortable doing so, or to look up or down during the visualization exercise.
- Read out of these short sentences, leaving a few seconds between them:

“Feel the floor beneath you. Do you notice any sounds? Focus on the movement of your breath. Try to imagine warmth filling your body, starting from your toes and up to your head. Feel the warmth. Imagine being outside in your neighbourhood or at your school. You can see children around you. They look happy. You are walking around. What can you see the children doing? What are the adults doing? The children don’t live with any fear. They have everything they need. There is no suffering. You smile back at them. You feel happy. You can now slowly, in your own time, open your eyes again. Keep this feeling of warmth, and your vision within you – it will be your engine for this exercise.”

STEP 2 CREATION 20 MIN

- Participants form groups of 3 or 4. Using the large sheets of paper and colour markers or crayons, they explain their individual vision to the others. By using different elements of their own visions, encourage them to create a joint vision. They can add new words too, and decide to present their vision in different creative forms, e.g. a story, poem, rap, etc.

STEP DISCUSSION 20 MIN

- Groups pair up and present their creation to each other. Ask them to discuss some of the elements that made up their vision. Encourage them to identify at least one thing that could help make their vision a reality.

STEP 4 ACTIONS 15 MIN

In plenary ask the participants to share the following:

- ▶ elements that made up their group vision;
- ▶ what they could do to start making their vision a reality.



© AI (Photo: Maria Margarida Gaspar)

Portuguese students play a game of “YES to Diversity, NO to Discrimination” as part of the Fight Discrimination in Europe campaign, 2011.

ACTIVITY 9 TAKE ACTION!

Identifying a child rights issue to tackle and devising an action plan.¹⁹

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Participants will be able to:

- name actors who can influence child rights;
- identify concrete actions that they can take to improve a child rights problem.

TIMING

60 min

WHAT YOU NEED

- A flipchart/board
- Large sheet of papers and pens or markers

THIS ACTIVITY HAS 4 STEPS

- | | | |
|--------|----------------------------|--------|
| Step 1 | Explanation and setting up | 5 min |
| Step 2 | Plenary discussion | 20 min |
| Step 3 | Group work | 25 min |
| Step 4 | Discussion | 10 min |

FACILITATION TIPS



- ☑ This activity should ideally take place after other activities, particularly Activity 6: Child rights research (page 40) and/or Activity 8: Dream Big, Now (page 50).
- ☑ You can prepare the flipchart/board by writing the group work questions on it in advance.



© Anders Hellberg

Greta Thunberg, who started the school strike for climate movement.

¹⁹ Inspired by Oxfam GB's Climate Challenge activity pack: <https://oxfamlibrary.openrepository.com/handle/10546/620695>

STEP 1 EXPLANATION AND SETTING UP 5 MIN

- Tell participants that this activity focuses on the role they can play in improving a child rights problem.

STEP 2 PLENARY DISCUSSION 20 MIN

- In plenary, ask participants to think of a child rights problem that they discussed during previous activities. Which actors have influence over it, and how?
- To guide the discussion, write 'family', 'school', 'police', 'government', 'yourself' on a flipchart/board, and any other actors suggested by participants.
- Then write on another flipchart: 'Raise awareness'; 'campaigning'; 'fundraising' and 'change personal behaviour'. Tell participants that these are examples of different types of action they can take. Ask them how they understand these categories and clarify them:

Raise awareness: *Sharing your learning about important child rights issues with others.*

Campaigning: *Putting pressure on actors with the power to change the situation.*

Fundraising: *Raising money for groups or initiatives with a positive impact on child rights.*

Change personal behaviour: *What all/some of us can do in our everyday lives for child rights.*

- Ask participants to suggest possible actions that would fall into different categories and write them on the flipchart/board. If they run out of ideas, you can suggest the following:
 - ▶ educating others: sharing your learnings by talking and doing activities with them;
 - ▶ lobbying: organizing a petition, writing letters;
 - ▶ joining an existing campaign;
 - ▶ creating a performance;
 - ▶ organizing a dialogue
 - ▶ inviting a guest speaker, becoming a guest speaker yourself or running trainings for other children;
 - ▶ creating posters/leaflets;
 - ▶ making a presentation;
 - ▶ researching a child rights problem in your community;
 - ▶ baking and selling cakes to raise money;
 - ▶ contacting/publishing an article in local or national media;
 - ▶ using social media to share information, actions and ideas;
 - ▶ conducting a survey and sharing the results.

STEP 3 GROUP WORK

25 MIN

- Participants form groups of 3 or 4. Each group needs a large sheet of paper, pens or markers. They should then pick one idea from those discussed in plenary (or come up with another one). They can then answer the following questions on the large sheet of paper:
 1. **What child rights problem do we want to improve?**
 2. **Which actors have influence over it?**
 3. **What do we want our action to achieve?**
 4. **What different tasks are required?**
 5. **Who could help us?**
 6. **What is the first step that we are going to take, and when?**

STEP 4 DISCUSSION

10 MIN

- In plenary, ask participants the following questions:
 1. **Do you feel that you have the power to improve a child rights problem?**
 2. **What type of action is feasible and what type is less feasible?**
 3. **Would your action be stronger if people from other groups join your group?**
 4. **How will you be able to know if your action brought the desired results?**
- As an **optional further step**, consider developing a joint collective action in the classroom or school. Whatever the size of the action, follow-up discussions with participants could support them and help solve any issues as they arise.



© Astrid Chitou/Amnesty International

Young Amnesty activists in Cote d'Ivoire enjoy themselves whilst collecting signatures for the 2023 Write for Rights cases.



© Søren Malmose

School students in Denmark put the spotlight on sexual and reproductive rights by publishing over 100 newspapers on human rights.

DIGITAL CHILD RIGHTS

This in-depth section focuses on children's rights and the risks they face when they use digital tools.

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ACTIVITY 12 ADDRESSING DIGITAL RISKS	77

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Participants will be able to:

- ☑ discuss the impact of digital technology on children's lives;
- ☑ illustrate the role of digital media in building people's understanding of the world;
- ☑ recognize how politicized content and disinformation affect children's right to access information;
- ☑ criticize the role of social media in deepening polarization and undermining trust;
- ☑ list the rights that are impacted by social media companies when we use their services;
- ☑ analyze how companies' practices and business models can be detrimental to child rights;
- ☑ identify the different risks digital technology poses for children;
- ☑ contrast different actors' responsibility to address those risks.

FACILITATION TIPS

- ☑ *It is important to adapt these activities to your specific context, type of technology and age of participants. We recommend reading the background information before running the activities, as this section is relatively heavy on theoretical content.*

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The digital environment is expanding dramatically. While in 2012, only one third of the world population had access to the internet, by 2022 this figure had doubled to two thirds.²⁰ However, this progress has been unequal and a global digital divide still separates the world: in high-income countries 92% of the population has access to the internet, compared to just 26% in low-income countries.²¹

Yet, it is in low-income countries that the difference between age groups is the most striking. The proportion of young people aged 15-24 with internet access is 70% higher than in the rest of the population. This means that the global digital divide is narrowing because of young people's much faster digital uptake.²²

The online environment has become increasingly important in most aspects of children's and young people's lives, including how they communicate, learn, move around, and organize socially and politically. While this offers new opportunities for realizing their rights, it also presents risks of violating and abusing them.

THE DIGITAL ENVIRONMENT

The digital environment encompasses, among other things, information and communications technologies (ICT), including digital networks, content, services and applications; connected or 'smart' devices; virtual and augmented reality; biometrics; robotic; artificial intelligence (AI); and automated systems, algorithms and data analytics.²³ These technologies are used in various areas of children's lives (as described in *Activity 10*, page 66), including communication, entertainment, shopping, health and education.



© Luisa Balaban

Children need meaningful access to digital technology²⁴ to exercise several of their rights, including to information (CRC *Article 17*), freedom of expression (*Article 13*), freedom of association and peaceful assembly (*Article 15*), and – increasingly, as the COVID-19 pandemic has shown – education (*Article 28*). Achieving equal digital access for all children is therefore a child rights imperative.

Yet, these very same rights, and others, are also under threat online. This is partly due to the relatively unregulated nature of this environment, which can be abused in ways that are harmful to children (see under other digital risks, page 62), and because of the business models of the private companies that shape our digital worlds.

20 https://www.itu.int/hub/publication/d-ind-ict_mdd-2022/ (2022).

21 https://www.itu.int/hub/publication/d-ind-ict_mdd-2022/ (2022).

22 https://www.itu.int/hub/publication/d-ind-ict_mdd-2022/ (2022).

23 The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child defines these terms in an annex to its General Comment 25: <http://bit.ly/3HTklxX>.

24 Digital technology can be defined as technology that uses digital information or data in the form of binary code (ones and zeroes).

SURVEILLANCE-BASED BUSINESS MODEL

Among the five companies with the world's highest market capitalization (which measures a company's financial value) across all industries, four belong to the technology sector. 'Big Tech' or 'Tech Giants' refer to the most dominant companies in that sector, namely Alphabet (Google), Amazon, Apple, Meta (formerly known as Facebook) and Microsoft, all based in the USA.

Two of these companies concentrate considerable power by having a particularly wide reach. If we combined the users of Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp and Messenger, a third of the world's population is using a Meta-owned service every day. Meta thus sets the terms for much of human connection in our digital age. A second company, Google, occupies an even larger share of the online world. Google accounts for around 90% of global search engine use and its browser, Chrome, is the world's dominant web browser.²⁵

What these two companies have in common is their business model: this is their main strategy for generating their colossal revenues. It is based on accumulating and analysing large amounts of data about people. Instead of charging a fee for their services, the companies require users to give up their personal data. They can then use this data to create detailed profiles of users' personalities and make predictions about their behaviour, with the aim of influencing that behaviour through targeted advertising and behavioural 'nudges'.

This business model has been dubbed 'surveillance-based' because it relies on tracking and monitoring our online activity. The surveillance machinery reaches well beyond the platforms themselves and includes the physical world too. Overall, companies collect extensive



© Luisa Balaban

data on our searches and clicks: where we go, who we talk to and what we say. Through the analysis made possible by computing power (data analytics), they can infer some of our most private attributes, including our political opinions, ethnicities, moods and vulnerabilities.²⁶

Corporate surveillance can also feed into state surveillance. For instance, through a secret program called PRISM, the National Security Agency (NSA) of the USA collected information about millions of people, both domestically and abroad, from companies such as Google, Meta, Facebook at the time of whistleblower Edward Snowden's revelations) and Apple, by tapping directly into their servers.²⁷

Find out more about the surveillance-based business model here:

- Amnesty International's report *Surveillance giants: How the business model of Google and Facebook threatens human rights*
- A [video interview](#) with technologist Jaron Lanie

25 <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/pol30/1404/2019/en/> (2019).

26 <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/pol30/1404/2019/en/> (2019).

27 <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2013/jun/06/us-tech-giants-nsa-data>

CHILD RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS

The implications for child rights are far reaching. The most obvious implication is an invasion of children's privacy. This contravenes their right to privacy (*CRC Article 16*) that protects their intimate sphere and is critical to the development of their personality throughout life.²⁸ Another implication pertains to children's right to freedom of thought (*Article 14*), because companies' profiling methods and persuasive strategies have the potential to affect their behaviour and emotions.

By invading children's privacy and potentially interfering with their inner state, these companies may jeopardise children's autonomy. In fact, by subjecting children to manipulation on the basis of their psychological vulnerabilities can undermine their ability to freely make informed decisions and exercise their rights. This presents serious concerns for child rights, as children's autonomy is inherent to their dignity and other rights protected by the CRC.

The surveillance-based business model of Big Tech companies can also undermine children's best interests (*Article 3*) in several other respects, because of its following knock-on effects:

Addictive features

The surveillance-based business model relies on collecting large amounts of data. Companies have therefore incorporated addictive features into digital products and services in order to maximise the time that users will spend and the data they will produce. These features include notifications, endless scrolling and gamification (such as competition for likes and followers). These draw on psychological vulnerabilities

such as loneliness, our 'fear of missing out' (FOMO) and our longing for social validation.

While this addiction is behavioural, it also has a chemical component. Through a system of pleasure and reward, positive online interactions release neurotransmitters such as dopamine in the brain, which can lead to a cycle of compulsive use. This takes place in a context where the digital environment is becoming increasingly important for children's socialization, sense of belonging and political engagement, thereby reinforcing its addictive power. Addiction can potentially be harmful to children's wellbeing and healthy development (*Articles 6 & 24*) and may also undermine their autonomy.

Feedback loops

The addictive power of the digital environment is reinforced by a constant feedback loop fuelled by algorithms: the more data on children is extracted and analysed, the more granular the profiling of individual children becomes; the more targeted the content curated to them by algorithm will be; the more addicted children become; and the more time they'll spend using the services, thereby producing more data.

Algorithms do not have a moral conscience. In the absence of proper safeguards, algorithmic recommendation systems may prioritize content that maximizes children's engagement, regardless of how appropriate or useful it is. This can have profound consequences for children, leading to the proliferation of echo chambers, inflammatory and undesirable content. This might in turn capture more attention and elicit a stronger emotional response from children, even though these can all be detrimental to their rights and wellbeing.

28 <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/ahrc4637-artificial-intelligence-and-privacy-and-childrens-privacy> (2021).

Inflammatory content

For instance, inflammatory content like hate speech is commonplace on social media. Hate speech refers to advocating national, racial or religious hatred that amounts to discrimination, hostility or violence (see Inequalities in child rights within countries, page 30).

While platforms do provide some content moderation by removing text, images and videos that don't comply with community standards, they don't always stop the spread of hate speech. Hate speech may infringe on children's rights to be protected from abuse (*Article 19*) and discrimination (*Article 2*). It can also lead to physical harm, such as when real-world discrimination, hostility and violence.²⁹

Another type of inflammatory content that algorithms help to spread is disinformation, which can infringe on children's right to access to information (*Article 17*). Disinformation is false information spread deliberately in order to deceive. It aims to create confusion and is sometimes used as a form of propaganda or psychological warfare. Misinformation differs from disinformation in that it includes false information that does not involve deceptive intent.

Echo chambers

While disinformation often aims to support specific political goals, not all politicized content constitutes disinformation. On the contrary, most politicized content relies on real information framed in a particular way. Yet not all such content finds its way into a child's social media feed. Under the surveillance-based business model, children may be targeted with content that confirms their pre-existing views, because such content seeks to attract more attention.



© Jiří Doležal

A school in the Czech Republic using technology to help children diagnosed with a mild mental disability.

This personalization of one's online experience creates so-called 'echo chambers' or 'filter bubbles' which entrap children in certain beliefs by depriving them of an opportunity to question them. Again, this could violate children's right to access to information (*Article 17*), which implies a right to be exposed to a plurality of information to develop one's own opinions.

Echo chambers and filter bubbles may have damaging knock-on effects on children. They could increase polarization, namely the growing divide between people with different beliefs. Children could also become entrenched in their own viewpoints and be less open to compromise and dialogue with others.

²⁹ For instance, Amnesty International found that Meta's algorithms proactively amplified and promoted content which incited violence, hatred and discrimination against the Rohingya, a Muslim minority group in Myanmar. Meta therefore has a responsibility to provide survivors with an effective remedy. <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/asa16/5933/2022/en/> (2022).

This may be at odds with children’s right to be empowered to live “in a spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, gender equality and friendship among all peoples” (*Article 29*).

Polarization also erodes trust or consensus reality, as children may become less likely to agree on a shared understanding of facts they see as true. The consequences could be devastating for children’s participation rights, as it can lead to apathy and disengagement with the world. For example, when children are misled to distrust the reality of climate change, they may in effect be denied the means to organize collectively to combat it. The right of children to express their views in matters affecting them and to have those views given due weight (*Article 12*) could be directly affected.

Mindless content

In parallel to inflammatory content, another type of content flourishes in the digital environment. It might appear as less harmful but is actually more pernicious: mindless content. Such lightweight and trivial content is designed to be consumed ‘mindlessly’. It is often used as a form of entertainment or distraction and can be very addictive.

It may decrease children’s ability to think critically, feel empathy for others and consider important political and social issues. In that sense, it can potentially affect children’s exercise of all their rights, and particularly their education, which should be directed to developing their “personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential” (*Article 29*).

Some examples:

Endless Memes and GIFs: *While entertaining, constant scrolling through memes or GIFs often lacks depth and doesn’t provide meaningful information or engagement.*

Clickbait Articles: *Content designed with sensational headlines to attract clicks but offering little valuable or insightful content.*

Repetitive Viral Videos or Challenges: *Videos that go viral for trends or challenges often don’t promote critical thinking or learning (e.g., videos with simple, repetitive actions or humor).*


Unending Social Media Feeds: *Social platforms like Instagram or TikTok encourage endless scrolling, with much of the content being light or superficial.*

Mental health

Addictive, inflammatory and mindless content may potentially all have a negative impact on children’s mental health. Meta’s own research found that Instagram makes body image issues worse for one in three teenage girls.³⁰ Beyond the sole topic of body image, the rise of “influencer culture” promoted by social media is also potentially at fault, because of the unrealistic expectations that it may place on children.

30 <https://www.wsj.com/articles/facebook-knows-instagram-is-toxic-for-teen-girls-company-documents-show-11631620739>, 14 September 2021.

OTHER DIGITAL RISKS

	CONTENT Child as recipient	CONTACT Child as participant	CONDUCT Child as actor	CONTRACT Child as consumer
AGGRESSIVE	Violent, gory, graphic, racist, hateful and extremist content	Harassment, stalking, hateful behaviour, unwanted surveillance	Bullying, hateful or hostile peer activity e.g. trolling, exclusion, shaming	Identity theft, fraud, phishing, scams, gambling, blackmail, security risks
SEXUAL	Pornography (legal and illegal), sexualization of culture, body image norms	Sexual harassment, sexual grooming, generation and sharing of child sexual abuse material	Sexual harassment, non-consensual sexual messages, sexual pressures	Sextortion, trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation, streaming child sexual abuse
VALUES	Age-inappropriate user-generated or marketing content, mis/disinformation	Ideological persuasion, radicalization and extremist recruitment.	Potentially harmful user communities e.g. self-harm, anti-vaccine, peer pressures	Information filtering, profiling bias, polarisation, persuasive design
CROSS-CUTTING	Privacy and data protection abuses, physical and mental health risk, forms of discrimination			

Reference: [Children Online: Research and Evidence \(CO:RE\)](#)

Digital risks for children can be classified into these four categories:³¹

- Content:** *the types of information children are exposed to online, such as inappropriate or harmful material like hate speech, disinformation, violence and pornography.*
- Contact:** *the interactions children have with others online, in particular adults seeking inappropriate contact.*
- Conduct:** *the actions children take online that can be harmful to them or to others.*
- Contract:** *the agreements that children make online, such as accepting website or*

app service terms with clauses that put their privacy and security at risk.

Activity 12 (page 77) provides a list of 20 digital risks, with their definitions classified into these four categories. Additionally, facilitators could also mention:

Algorithmic discrimination

This can potentially perpetuate and amplify existing inequalities against children subjected to systemic oppressions, such as racism and sexism (see Inequalities in child rights within countries, page 30). It is a form of biased treatment by automated systems that make decisions based on algorithms.

31 UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, General Comment No. 25 (2021)

Algorithmic discrimination can occur when the data used to train algorithms reflects existing biases against certain categories of children, leading to discrimination in areas such as education, social protection and policing. Under international law, children are protected against all forms of discrimination (*Article 2*).

Generative AI:

Generative AI³² creates entirely new content—like images, audio, text, or videos—instead of simply identifying or categorizing content that already exists. While it can be used positively in areas such as education, it can also be used to generate misleading and harmful content, such as ‘deepfake’ videos or child pornography. Generative AI has the potential to further undermine trust and consensus reality (see ‘echo chambers’ page 60). Children have a stake in knowing whether they are faced with content created by a human or a machine.

Metaverse

The concept of the metaverse is still evolving and refers to a future vision of a shared virtual space where people can interact and engage with each other and digital objects. The blurred lines between the virtual and physical worlds in the metaverse can potentially increase risks for children. They may be more likely to trust people they meet online, and harmful content – like explicit material – can affect them more strongly than passive media, such as text or images.

GOVERNMENTS’ DUTIES AND COMPANIES ‘ RESPONSIBILITIES

As outlined above, the digital environment has serious implications for child rights, for better and for worse. Governments have a duty to realise child rights, including online. This includes striving to bridge digital divides by ensuring equal digital access for all children. It also includes protecting children from abuse – by adults, by other children or by companies (*Article 19*).

Also, when children have their rights abused, governments must ensure that they have access to an effective remedy. Companies have a responsibility to respect children’s rights, which means that they should not only avoid infringing on them, but also address the possible adverse impacts of their business activity.³³

Amnesty International’s report *Surveillance giants: How the business model of Google and Facebook threatens human rights* denounced, among others, tech companies’ assaults on privacy. Facebook responded that their products and services can’t equal surveillance, because the decision to sign in and give away personal data is “entirely voluntary”. This can be disputed, as many users may feel that they cannot do without social media platforms and so have little choice except to accept their terms of service.³⁴

On the contrary, Google, Meta and other companies that depend on invasive data-driven operations should transition to a rights-respecting business model. As a first step, they should identify, prevent, mitigate and account for the adverse human rights impacts of their business models, in particular on children.

32 Artificial intelligence refers to computer systems able to perform tasks normally requiring human intelligence, such as visual perception, speech recognition, decision-making and translation between languages.

33 <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/migration/in/UNGP-Brochure.pdf> (2011).

34 *Surveillance giants: How the business model of Google and Facebook threatens human rights* (Index: POL 30/1404/2019) <https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/pol30/1404/2019/en/>

Because self-regulation by companies is often not enough, governments should also step in to prevent companies from making access to their services conditional on children “consenting” to collecting, processing or sharing their personal data for marketing or advertising purposes. Some solutions could include prohibiting the automated processing of children’s personal data to predict their personal preferences, behaviour and attitudes,³⁵ and regulating the integration of addictive features in digital products and services.

Finally, education is key, for children and for those around them, such as schools, families and guardians. Everyone should be made aware of child rights issues online, including the addictive and manipulative power of digital products and services; inflammatory and mindless content; echo chambers and the erosion of consensus reality; and mental health impacts on children; as well as other digital risks linked to content, contact, conduct and contract; and risks linked to algorithmic discrimination, generative AI and the metaverse. This approach allows for the development of critical perspectives on the digital environment, along with the ability to respond appropriately.

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has also published guidance on children’s rights in the digital environment, with detailed recommendations.



A Human Rights Friendly School activity at Accra High School in Ghana.

35 <https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/thematic-reports/ahrc4637-artificial-intelligence-and-privacy-and-childrens-privacy> (2021).

CHILDREN'S DIGITAL HYGIENE

Children themselves can take steps to develop good digital habits and have a safer and more positive experience online (this is sometimes referred to as 'digital hygiene'). Here is a list of practical suggestions:³⁶

1. *Be careful about sharing personal information online, such as your name, address and phone number.*
2. *Use strong, unique passwords and never share them with anyone.*
3. *Be careful about what you click on and download, as it could contain viruses or malware.*
4. *Report any online bullying or mean comments to a trusted adult.*
5. *Don't share photos or videos that you wouldn't want everyone to see.*
6. *Limit the amount of time you spend on your devices and take breaks regularly.*
7. *Use privacy settings to control who can see your information and posts.*
8. *Be respectful and kind to others when using digital communication tools.*
9. *Don't believe everything you read online.*
10. *Remember that anything you post online can be seen by others, even if you delete it later.*

The NGO Tactical Tech has published [Data Detox x Youth](#), a free multi-language resource to help children aged 11 to 16 to take control of their tech. It includes four sections:

- Digital Privacy, which focuses on reducing data traces and understanding online profiling;
- Digital Security, with tips on creating strong and secure passwords;
- Digital Wellbeing, which deals with the addictive nature of smartphones;
- Misinformation, a guide for consuming and sharing information online.



A young activist participating in RIGHTS Click, a 6-year Programme launched by Amnesty International in 2022 to advance the digital rights, health and well-being of children and young people across the world.

36 Created with the help of ChatGPT, an artificial intelligence chatbot: <https://chat.openai.com/>.

ACTIVITY 10

WHEN INFORMATION DIVIDES US

Case studies highlighting how digital media influences our worldview.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Participants will be able to:

- discuss the impact of digital technology on children's lives;
- illustrate the role of digital media in building people's understanding of the world;
- recognize how politicized content and disinformation can affect children's right to access information;
- (if you have time) criticize social media's role in deepening polarization and undermining trust.

TIMING

60 min

WHAT YOU NEED

- A flipchart/board
- Pen and paper
- Copies of the three case studies on [Handout F](#) (pages 70 and 71), cut along the dotted lines (one per group)

THIS ACTIVITY HAS 4 STEPS

- | | | |
|---------------|--------------------|---------------|
| Step 1 | Warm-up discussion | 15 min |
| Step 2 | Individual reading | 10 min |
| Step 3 | Group discussion | 15 min |
| Step 4 | Plenary discussion | 20 min |



© Maskot

Teenagers, and other young people, must be wary of harmful content when using their phones, even when messaging friends.

STEP 1 WARM-UP DISCUSSION 15 MIN

- Tell participants that this activity is about digital technology. After a quick warm-up discussion they will examine a case study about digital media.

*Children have the **right to access information that promotes their wellbeing and healthy development** (CRC Article 17) but in practice, information can divide us in the digital age.*

- On the flipchart/board write the word 'digital'. Ask participants for examples of how they use digital technology in their everyday lives. These can include:
 - ▶ social media, e.g. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, TikTok, Snapchat and other platforms where people connect and share content online;
 - ▶ entertainment, e.g. gaming, streaming films, TV shows and music online;
 - ▶ communication, e.g. emails, instant messaging and video conferencing;
 - ▶ shopping, e.g. websites or apps to browse, select and buy things online;
 - ▶ navigation, e.g. tools for finding directions using digital maps and GPS;
 - ▶ education, e.g. learning management systems, which enable teachers and students to share educational content, assignments or assessments.

Digital technology uses digital information or data in binary code (ones and zeroes) to perform a wide range of tasks, like those outlined above.

- Next, invite participants to discuss some statements about digital technology. Read each statement out loud. First, ask those who agree to raise their hand. Second, ask those who disagree to raise their hand. Third, ask one person who agrees and one person who disagrees to briefly explain their reasoning. Stress that this is only meant as a quick warm-up discussion and that these issues will be discussed in more detail during the activity and in subsequent activities:
 1. *Digital technology allows us to live better lives.*
 2. *Smartphone users develop an urge to check their device every few minutes.*
 3. *Social media makes us feel good about ourselves.*
 4. *Social media allows us to be informed about the world.*
 5. *Social media allows us to come together with people who hold different beliefs.*
- While the first statement should elicit ambivalent thoughts around digital technology as both a blessing and a curse, the second touches on technology's addictive character; the third on social media's impact on mental health; the fourth on the prevalence of mindless content, politicized content and disinformation; and the fifth on the polarizing effect of social media.

STEP 2 INDIVIDUAL READING 10 MIN

- Tell participants that we will now focus on issues specifically related to the two last statements, namely on the role of digital media – particularly social media - in building people’s understanding of the world and of a shared reality.
- Form groups of 3. Within each group, ensure that each participant receives one of the three case studies and sets of questions (Handout F, pages 70 and 71). If possible, they should not yet know that the other group members have received a different case study.
- Tell participants that they have 5 minutes to read the case study individually, without showing it to the others, and to answer the questions in the handout on a separate sheet of paper. Make clear that the case study has been invented for this activity (e.g. it is not a real story).

STEP 3 GROUP DISCUSSION 15 MIN

- Once the individual reading time is over, ask the participants to **first** compare their answers to the questions within their group. Do they notice any differences?
- **Second**, reveal that they were given three different case studies which all refer to the same invented situation. Each participant then reads the two other case studies.
- **Third**, write the following questions on the flipchart/board and invite the groups answer them:
 1. **Would you have felt the same towards the activists and their cause if you had received another of the three case studies?**

2. **Can you note elements in the case studies likely to produce a specific emotional response (e.g. language/tone, framing of situation, voice given, etc.)?**

STEP 4 PLENARY DISCUSSION 20 MIN

- Come back into the main group. **First**, ask participants the following questions. If the case studies were real and not invented:
 1. **What could have been the intentions of the authors of each case study?**
 2. **What could be the impact of each case study on readers’ understanding of the world?**
- Explain that we rely on information from digital media to learn about people we have never met and places we have never visited. In doing so, we build our understanding of the world. Yet, this information is not neutral: it is presented in ways that influence us, often through our emotions.
- A critical approach to information is therefore crucial for preserving our autonomy, i.e. our ability to freely make informed decisions.
- **Second**, ask participants the following questions:
 1. **What differences do you see between case studies 1 and 2 on the one hand, and case study 3 on the other?**
 2. **What elements can you use for assessing the trustworthiness of each case study?**
- Explain that case studies 1 and 2 provide politicized content:

Politicized content is informed by a vision of how power should be distributed in society, and aims to further spread that vision.

- **Case study 1** defends the interests of the police and company, while **case study 2** defends the interests of activists, local communities and the environment. Yet in both cases the story appears to be based on facts and published by a ‘reputable newspaper’ bound to high standards for providing reliable information.
- Explain that while the story in **case study 3** also provides politicized content, it does not seem entirely based on facts. The information about the funding received from ‘foreign agents’ in broad daylight is not credible and cannot be verified. The author of the story and the context of publication cannot be verified either. The tone is inflammatory. Case study 3 therefore appears to be an example of disinformation.

Disinformation is false or misleading information spread deliberately in order to deceive. It is harmful to children and infringes on their right to access information (CRC Article 17) among other rights.

- **Third**, ask participants to reflect on healthier behaviours they can adopt when dealing with online information (e.g. assessing authors and their likely intentions, using reliable sources, double-

checking information, seeking information that questions their existing beliefs, etc.).

If you have more time available you can extend Step 5:

Discuss how social media is often rife with politicized content and false information. Indeed, companies seek to maximize the time users spend on their platforms for profit, with content that is more likely to capture their attention. Stress that this has transformed social media into echo chambers which can deepen polarization and undermine trust and consensus reality.

*In an **echo chamber**, a user’s online experience is personalized by algorithmic recommendation systems. By showing us only content that confirms our pre-existing beliefs, it becomes harder to critically question our own beliefs.*

Polarization refers to the growing divide between people with different beliefs. We become entrenched in our own viewpoints and less open to compromise or dialogue with others.

Consensus reality refers to a shared understanding of facts we consider to be true. Polarization can erode this as we become less likely to agree on facts that contradict our beliefs.

- List the possible adverse effects on child rights and discuss what participants can do to protect their rights.

A student action in Kampala, Uganda, part of the School strike for climate movement (also known as Fridays for Future), which demanded politicians act urgently in order to prevent further global warming and climate change, 2019.



HANDOUT F

CASE STUDIES

CASE 1

ECO-TERRORISTS ATTACK REGION'S ECONOMIC HEARTLAND

Article on the website of a reputable newspaper and posted on social media

A horde of eco-terrorist militants caused chaos at Energotopia natural gas drilling site, considered the economic heartland of the region, on Monday morning.

According to the police chief, the attackers stormed the industrial site and harassed workers heading to their workplace.

An Energotopia spokesperson said: "The intimidation tactics of a handful of extremists are regrettable. We are proud of our work, which brings economic and social benefits to the whole region. We place environmental issues at the forefront of our concerns."

Thanks to the rapid intervention of the police, who carried out arrests, the militants were neutralized and order was restored shortly before noon.

After reading this, what emotions do you feel:

- a) in general?
- b) towards the activists?
- c) towards the cause they defend?

CASE 2

PEACEFUL ACTION BY ENVIRONMENTAL CAMPAIGNERS REPRESSED

Article on the website of a reputable newspaper and posted on social media

Aurora, a 17-year-old human rights defender, is still in shock. On Monday morning, she witnessed the violent repression by the police of a peaceful action by the Stop The Drilling Collective:

"We were carrying placards and distributing flyers in front of Energotopia natural gas drilling site, when the police came, hit us with their batons and took us into custody."

The campaign group was denouncing the extractive operations of Energotopia, which they hold responsible for air and water pollution in the indigenous communities around the site.

Above all, Aurora feels compelled to act to address the climate emergency. According to the United Nations, resource extraction is responsible for half of the world's carbon emission.

After reading this, what emotions do you feel:

- a) in general?
- b) towards the activists?
- c) towards the cause they defend?

CASE 3

ALERT! LEFTIST ACTIVISTS ARE FUNDED BY FOREIGN AGENTS!

Message forwarded many times on WhatsApp and other social media

As you know, leftist activists stormed Energotopia natural gas drilling site. As appalling as it is, their action is even more disgusting than it seems.

Indeed, while propaganda was being handed out, foreign agents were seen offering a briefcase of money to the activists. It is common knowledge that dark interests are at work to destabilize our nation.

Arresting those traitors and then releasing them, like the police did, is not enough!

Don't believe what the lying mainstream media tells you. To preserve our way of life, let's demand that all traitor activist groups be disbanded.

If you too are outraged by the moral decay of our times, forward this message to at least ten of your contacts.

After reading this, what emotions do you feel:

- a) in general?
- b) towards the activists?
- c) towards the cause they defend?



© Briel Calderon

Students and supporters take the streets of central Bangkok to demand action on climate change as part of the Fridays for Future and Youth Strike 4 Climate movements.

ACTIVITY 11

ZOOM IN ON THE FINE PRINT

Reflecting on social media companies' power through child-friendly terms and conditions.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Participants will be able to:

- list which of our rights are impacted by social media companies when we use their services;
- analyze how companies' practices and business models can be detrimental to child rights.

TIMING

60 min

WHAT YOU NEED

- Copies of Handout G (page 76) with a simplified extract from Instagram's terms and conditions (ideally one per participant)

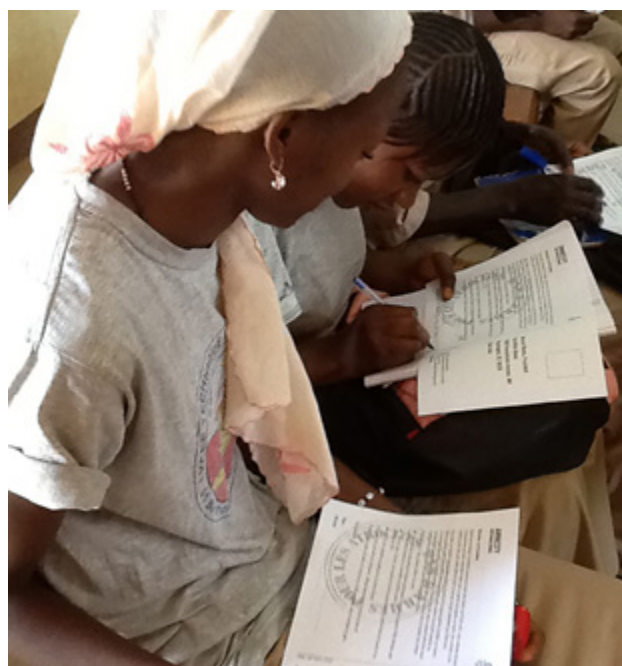
THIS ACTIVITY HAS 5 STEPS

- | | | |
|---------------|--|---------------|
| Step 1 | Explanation and set up | 5 min |
| Step 2 | Discussion "our rules" & "your rights" | 20 min |
| Step 3 | Discussion "our rights" | 20 min |
| Step 4 | Debriefing | 15 min |

FACILITATION TIPS



- ☑ *Instagram's simplified terms and conditions were produced by the UK Children's Commissioner, which did the same for Facebook, Snapchat, WhatsApp and YouTube. While we suggest focusing on Instagram, you can adapt this activity to be adapted for other social media platforms too.*



School students in Burkina Faso participating in an Amnesty action in 2013.

STEP 1 EXPLANATION AND SET UP 5 MIN

- Ask participants if they use social media and if so, which platforms. Highlight that some messaging apps like WhatsApp can also be considered social media.
- Tell participants that this activity will explore the power imbalance between social media companies such as Meta, which owns Facebook, Instagram and WhatsApp, and their users. We will see how these companies' practices and business model can be detrimental to child rights.
- To start with we will look at Instagram's terms and conditions (T&Cs), which all users need to agree to when they open an account. Ask participants if they usually read T&Cs. Stress that most people don't read them or know the conditions they're agreeing to. Distribute Handout G (page 76) and note that this version of Instagram's T&Cs has been simplified and summarized by the UK's Children's Commissioner.
- Participants form groups of 4 or 5.

STEP 2 DISCUSSION "OUR RULES" & "YOUR RIGHTS" 20 MIN

- In groups, ask participants to read and discuss the sections on "our rules" and "your rights" and answer the following questions. In your opinion:
 1. **To what extent are these rules respected in reality?**
 2. **To what extent is Instagram a safe place for everyone?**
 3. **Is it fair that the content you create can be sold to others? And that your data is kept even after you delete your account? Why/not?**

- In plenary, go over some of these questions again and make the following comments:
 - ▶ There is a gap between theory and practice, as a lot of harmful content spreads on social media, including hate speech and cyberbullying. Companies often do not want to over-police their platforms because it can be costly and unpopular.

Hate speech means advocating national, racial or religious hatred that amounts to incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence.

Cyberbullying involves using technology to bully someone. It can include things like sending mean or threatening messages, spreading rumours or lies, or sharing embarrassing photos or videos

- **Freedom of expression** (CRC Article 13) should be protected online, including expressions we may disagree with. This right also includes the right to access information. There are limitations on freedom of expression, such as expression that harms the rights or reputations of others or that amounts to hate speech.
- Using Instagram may be detrimental to children and young people's **mental health**, in particular because it promotes unrealistic or undesirable lifestyles or body image.

STEP 3 DISCUSSION “OUR RIGHTS” 20 MIN

- In groups, participants read and discuss the section on “our rights” and answer the following questions:
 1. **To what extent would you say that the situation is fair or unfair?**
 2. **How do you feel about being subjected to targeted adverts without being aware of them?**
 3. **What do you think of Instagram deleting content or blocking an account without giving users a chance to oppose it?**
- In plenary, go over some of these questions again and make the following comments:
 - ▶ In the “your rights” section we learn that Instagram does not sell users’ personal information without their permission. However, users can easily give away such permission unwittingly. This can put children’s rights to privacy at risk (*Article 16*).
 - ▶ The business model of social media companies, i.e. the ways in which they generate profit, is manipulative and threatens our autonomy. Autonomy is an important concept in child and human rights which refers to our ability to freely make informed decisions.

The business model of social media companies has been dubbed ‘surveillance-based’ because it relies on tracking and monitoring our online activity to sell us products and services. Companies collect and analyze large amounts of data to create detailed profiles of our personality, behaviour and preferences. These profiles are then used to influence us through targeted advertising.

- As the business model of social media companies requires them to gather large amount of data, they incorporate addictive features into their products and design algorithms aiming to maximize the time we spend on their platforms.

Addictive social media features can be harmful to our health and wellbeing. They can include notifications, endless scrolling and gamification (competition for likes and followers). They draw on psychological vulnerabilities such as our ‘fear of missing out’ (FOMO) or our longing for social validation

- Social media is becoming increasingly important for people’s socialization, sense of belonging, political engagement and livelihoods. Because tech companies can make potentially unpredictable decisions based on users’ online activity without any consequences, they seem to hold disproportionate power.



© Luisa Balaban

A depiction of abuses on TikTok experienced by children and young people.

STEP 4 DEBRIEFING

15 MIN

- In plenary, ask the following questions:
 1. Were you surprised to discover some of the rights impacted by using social media companies' services?
 2. Do people really have a choice about being, or not being, on social media? What can be the cost of not being on social media?
 3. What do you take away from the discussion about social media companies' detrimental business model and practices (e.g. privacy issues; inflammatory and mindless content;

manipulation; addiction and disproportionate power)? What links do you see with child rights?

4. Knowing more about these challenges now, what healthier behaviours can you adopt when using social media?

- For practical tips, refer to the background information on children's digital hygiene, page 65.

A Digital Disruptors workshop run by Amnesty in South Africa, which equipped young activists with the knowledge and tools to develop youth-led campaigns, on safety and gender violence, 2023.



HANDOUT G

EXTRACT OF INSTAGRAM'S TERMS AND CONDITIONS IN SIMPLIFIED LANGUAGE

OUR RULES (DO YOU THINK THESE ARE RESPECTED IN REALITY?)

- | | |
|---|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. You must be 13 or over to use Instagram.2. Don't post anything showing violence or nudity, or that might make other people feel scared.3. Don't bully anyone or post anything horrible about people. | <ol style="list-style-type: none">4. Don't post other peoples' private or personal information.5. Don't use Instagram to do anything illegal.6. Read our Community Guidelines and obey them when using Instagram. |
|---|---|

YOUR RIGHTS (DO YOU THINK THIS IS FAIR?)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. You have the right to feel safe using Instagram.2. You own any original pictures and videos you post, but we are allowed to use them and let others anywhere in the world use them too. Other people might pay us for that, but we will not pay you.3. If you break the law or these rules, you will be held responsible. | <ol style="list-style-type: none">4. If you shut down your Instagram account, your photos, posts and profile will disappear from your account. However, if anyone shared your photos or details, or if we have used them ourselves for any reason, they might still appear on Instagram. We will also keep all the data we already have from you.5. We will not rent or sell your personal information without your permission. |
|--|--|

OUR RIGHTS (DO YOU THINK THIS IS FAIR?)

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Although you are responsible for the information you put on Instagram, we may keep, use and share your personal information with companies connected with Instagram. This includes your name, email address, phone number, your likes and dislikes, where you go, who your friends are, etc. We are not responsible for what other companies might do with this information.2. Instagram is not responsible for what happens if you connect your account to another app or website, for instance by sharing a picture, and the other app or website takes your personal information. | <ol style="list-style-type: none">3. We might send you adverts connected to your interests which we are monitoring. You cannot stop us doing this and it will not always be obvious that it is an advert.4. We can stop you from accessing Instagram at any time and for any reason. We can delete posts and other content randomly, without telling you, for any reason. If we do this, we will not be responsible for paying out any money and you won't have any right to complain.5. We are not responsible if somebody breaks the law or breaks these rules. |
|--|---|

Originally produced by the UK Children's Commissioner.

ACTIVITY 12

ADDRESSING DIGITAL RISKS

Exploring digital risks and the role of different actors in addressing them.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Participants will be able to:

- identify the different risks digital technology poses to children;
- contrast different actors responsibilities for addressing those risks.

TIMING

60 min

WHAT YOU NEED

- A flipchart or board
- Space to move around
- Four large tables
- Five copies of the definitions and classification of digital risks, including one copy of Handout H (pages 80 and 81) cut out along the dotted lines.
- Five copies of Categorizing Risks Handout I (page 82) cut out along the dotted lines

THIS ACTIVITY HAS 5 STEPS

- | | | |
|---------------|-----------------------------|---------------|
| Step 1 | Explanation and set up | 5 min |
| Step 2 | Risks and their definitions | 10 min |
| Step 3 | Classifying risks | 20 min |
| Step 4 | Group work on actors | 15 min |
| Step 5 | Debriefing and discussion | 10 min |

FACILITATION TIPS



- ☑ *This activity could be most appropriate for older students aged 14-17, or it can be adapted for younger participants.*
- ☑ *The content of this activity could be triggering. Allow participants to opt out without having to say why.*
- ☑ *If possible, create a quiet zone where students who opt out can reflect, calm down or simply have a break without feeling isolated or singled out.*
- ☑ *Devote enough time for debriefing at the end of any activities. This allows space for reflection and deeper learning, and also for managing any emotions that might come up.*

STEP 1 EXPLANATION AND SET UP 5 MIN

- Tell participants that this activity focuses on the risks that digital technology poses to children. We will explore what these risks are, how to classify them and what different actors should do to address those risks.

STEP 2 RISKS AND THEIR DEFINITIONS 10 MIN

- Distribute one or several of the 20 risk cards, and of the 20 corresponding definition cards (Handout H, pages 80 and 81) evenly between participants.
- Invite participants to move around and interact with each other to match each risk with its definition.
- Once this is done, respond to any clarification questions. If time allows, ask a few participants to share their risks and definitions with the whole group.

STEP 3 CLASSIFYING RISKS 20 MIN

- **Set up the tables:** Place one participant at each of the four tables. These participants, known as the “hosts,” will pass their risk and definition cards from the previous round to the others. They will then receive a risk category card (from Handout I, page 82), which they should keep hidden, along with a set of all the risks and definitions (from Handout H, pages 80 and 81) to place on their table.
- **Write key terms on the board:** On the flipchart or board, write the words ‘Content’, ‘Contact’, ‘Conduct’, and ‘Contract’—these are explained in the background section under other digital risks.

- **Hosts read out risk categories:** One at a time, ask each host to read the definition of the risk category they’ve been assigned (from Handout I, pages 82). They should avoid giving any examples.
- **Classifying risks:** Each participant takes their risk and its definition and places it at the table they believe it belongs to. They explain their reasoning to the hosts, who will check if they have placed the risk in the correct category. The host should discreetly verify this by checking their own risk category card and respond with ‘yes’ or ‘no’. Continue this process until all risks are correctly classified.
- **Presenting the categories:** Each table will then briefly present their risk category to the group (1 minute maximum). They should include examples to help everyone better understand the different categories.
- **Discussion:** Ask the group for their thoughts on this classification activity:
 1. **Does it help them understand digital risks better?**
 2. **Were they aware of all these risks before?**
 3. **Are any of the risks particularly relevant to their context?**
- Ask in plenary what participants think of this classification.
 1. **Does it help them to understand digital risks?**
 2. **Were participants aware of all of these risks before this activity?**
 3. **Are some risks particularly relevant in their context?**

STEP 4 GROUP WORK ON ACTORS 15 MIN

- On a flipchart/board, write the words ‘family’, ‘school’, ‘government’ and ‘companies’.
- Each of the four tables will now focus on one of these four actors and discuss the following questions (across all the risk categories):
 1. **What influence on digital risks does this actor have/what is their responsibility to address them?**
 2. **What actions could we take to push the actor to meet its responsibility?**
 3. **What can we do ourselves to reduce the risks for ourselves and other children?**

STEP 5 DEBRIEFING AND DISCUSSION 10 MIN

- In plenary, ask participants the following questions:
 1. **Do you feel safe online? How do you feel about the different risks we discussed today?**
 2. **Do you think that actors like governments and companies make enough effort to address those risks?**
 3. **What can we do ourselves to reduce the risks for ourselves and other children?**
- For practical tips, refer to the background information on children’s digital hygiene page 65.



Amnesty International Benin Letter Writing event, part of Amnesty’s annual Write for Rights Campaign, December 2020.

HANDOUT H

DEFINING AND CLASSIFYING DIGITAL RISKS

RISKS	DEFINITIONS
Discriminatory speech	Verbal or written speech that attacks or uses abusive language against an individual or group based on their identity.
Advocating hatred, often called 'hate speech'	Expression that incites others to discriminate, be hostile or violent towards members of a particular group.
Gory images	Images featuring bloodshed and violence.
Pornography	Media that depicts sexual activity and is intended to be arousing.
Body image norms	Societal expectations of how your body should look to be accepted and/or considered attractive.
Marketing of harmful products	Promoting products that harm our health and wellbeing or are age inappropriate (e.g. tobacco, alcohol, gambling, etc.).
Misinformation	Incorrect information.
Disinformation	False or misleading information spread deliberately to deceive.
Online harassment	Using digital tools to repeatedly cause psychological harm.
Sexual grooming	Gaining the trust of a child in order to sexually abuse, exploit or traffic them.
Generating child sexual abuse material	Creating visual material depicting a child engaged in explicit sexual activities or sexualized imagery of a child's body.
Extremist recruitment	Ideological indoctrination aimed at drawing a person into an extremist group or movement.





HANDOUT H

DEFINING AND CLASSIFYING DIGITAL RISKS

RISKS	DEFINITIONS
Cyberbullying	Using technology to bully someone, including by sending threatening messages or spreading rumours or embarrassing content.
Trolling	Deliberate attempt to upset or annoy others online.
Online sexual pressure	Attempting to push someone to engage in sexual behaviour online.
Harmful user communities	Formal or informal online groups that promote harmful views or practices, e.g. self-harm, anti-vaccine or peer pressure.
Identity theft	Stealing personal information to commit fraud, i.e. deception intended to result in financial or personal gain.
Online fraud	Deception intended to result in financial or personal gain.
Phishing	Email from a supposedly reliable sender trying to make someone reveal personal information, e.g. passwords and credit card numbers.
Persuasive design	Technology design aiming to influence someone to adopt a certain behaviour. An example of a technology designed to influence behavior is the use of habit-forming notifications on social media platforms, such as “likes” and comments notifications on Instagram or Facebook.
Echo chamber/ filter bubble	Personalizing an online experience by repeating information that reinforces pre-existing beliefs.

HANDOUT I

CATEGORIZING RISKS

RISK CATEGORIES	EXAMPLES
<p>CONTENT RISKS (CHILD IS THE RECIPIENT): <i>The child is exposed to inappropriate content.</i></p>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Hate speech■ Gory images■ Pornography■ Body image norms■ Marketing harmful products■ Misinformation■ Disinformation
<p>CONTACT RISKS (CHILD AS PARTICIPANT): <i>The child participates in risky communication with an adult seeking inappropriate contact.</i></p>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Online harassment■ Sexual grooming■ Generating child sexual abuse material■ Extremist recruitment
<p>CONDUCT RISKS (CHILD AS ACTOR): <i>The child acts in a way that contributes to risky content or contact.</i></p>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Cyberbullying■ Trolling■ Online sexual pressure■ Harmful user communities
<p>CONTRACT RISKS (CHILD AS CONSUMER): <i>The child is impacted by risky services following a contractual engagement with a digital provider.</i></p>	 <ul style="list-style-type: none">■ Identity theft■ Online fraud■ Phishing■ Persuasive design■ Filter bubble

LINKS AND REFERENCES IN THE TEXT

ABOUT THIS TOOLKIT

<https://academy.amnesty.org/learn/course/internal/view/elearning/221/an-introduction-to-child-rights>
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/documents/act35/020/2011/en/>
<https://www.amnesty.org/en/human-rights-education/human-rights-friendly-schools/>

SECTION 1

https://treaties.un.org/Pages/ViewDetails.aspx?src=TREATY&mtdsg_no=IV-11&chapter=4&clang=_en
<https://www.unicef.org/media/56661/file>

SECTION 2

<https://www.ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/crc>
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/hr-bodies/upr/documentation>
<https://data.unicef.org/country/>
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/crc>

SECTION 3

<https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2022/07/protect-the-protest/>
<https://academy.amnesty.org/learn/course/201/the-right-to-protest>

SECTION 4

https://youtu.be/kc_Jq42Og7Q
<https://core-evidence.eu/posts/4-cs-of-online-risk>
<https://www.ohchr.org/en/documents/general-comments-and-recommendations/general-comment-no-25-2021-childrens-rights-relation>
<https://datadetoxkit.org/en/families/datadetox-x-youth/>
<https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/report/simplified-social-media-terms-and-conditions-for-facebook-instagram-snapchat-youtube-and-whatsapp/>

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