



FACT SHEET

A CHILD'S RIGHT TO BE HEARD

Convention on the Rights of the Child
(Article 12)

The right to expression of opinion is a fundamental right from the moment of birth. It is not earned or granted at a certain age.

- **All children have the right to express themselves.** This right is universal. It applies equally to girls and boys. It applies to children of minorities, migrants and refugees.
- **Adults must learn to listen.** In some societies, adults expect children to be seen and not heard. But children often have valuable and important information and opinions. These are lost or wasted if adults do not listen.
- **Children have a right to take part in decisions about their lives.** Children's views and concerns must be listened to and taken into account on any matter that affects them.
- **The more important the decision, the more important it is that children participate.** Children should be involved in decisions regarding their education, health care and families. It is especially important that children are involved in decisions regarding placement in alternative care, adoption processes, immigration and asylum procedures.
- **Children's rights to resources have to be ensured and protected.** Children who earn a living have a right to their earnings. Children's inheritance rights have to be protected from theft by adults.

Why it is important

Children who are encouraged to express their opinions learn to take responsibility and become better at making decisions. Children who are encouraged to ask questions are more likely to develop the ability for critical thinking. These are important qualities of good citizenship.

SOURCE: Children as active citizens: Commitments and Obligations for Children's Civil Rights and Civic Engagement in East Asia and Pacific



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THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD





Benefits to society

- Children who are encouraged to express their opinions develop decision making and critical thinking skills, which improves their academic performance. These qualities help them make better decisions as adults, concerning themselves, their family, community and society.
- Better academic results lead to greater employability, higher earnings and a higher-quality workforce.
- Better interpersonal communication helps develop non-violent forms of solving conflicts. Less violence leads to more harmonious communities and stronger nations.
- Children who participate in decisions about their lives, tend to become more active citizens as adults. They participate more in decisions affecting their communities and societies.
- Government services are more effective and less wasteful if they are informed by children's opinions and concerns.

What is needed

- Promote active learning and teaching methods in education.
- Develop children's decision-making skills in schools and other institutions through mandated management committees, student councils and other participatory decision-making mechanisms.
- Develop capacities of teachers, health workers, social workers and other professionals to communicate with children and to involve children in decisions.
- Review legal and administrative procedures to ensure children's involvement in important decisions, such as custody, adoption, school, marriage, juvenile justice and institutional care.
- Raise awareness among adults and children about children's right to express their opinions.
- Promote parenting education and respect for children.



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