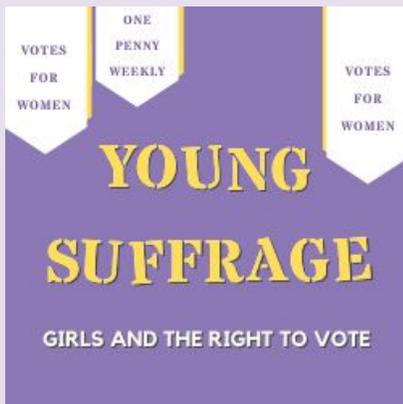




Informational Guide



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A Girl's Guide to Her Rights

Girls' rights are human rights.

Yet, millions of girls continue to struggle to claim them. Even when given by law, there is a failure to fully reflect the particular barriers they face.

While countries, states, and United Nations agencies are trying to guarantee their rights, girls often lack access to information, not knowing when they are being treated unlawfully.

This guide is based on the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, which guarantees the rights of all children.



STRONG
Girls
STRONG
WORLD

What is the Convention?

Adopted in 1989, the convention is a resolution that member States (countries) signed, pledging to ensure the rights of all children in their countries.

As of January 2020, 196 countries have ratified the Convention. This means that they have approved the Convention and consider it legally binding, some with reservations or different interpretations (which they are allowed to do).

One country has signed (agreed to) - but not yet ratified (become bound to obey) - the Convention: the United States of America.

The Convention has three optional protocols. One requires parties to ensure that children are not recruited compulsory into their armed forces. A second prohibits the sale of children, child prostitution, and child pornography. Finally, the Communications Procedure allows children or their representatives to file individual complaints about violations of their rights.

Could the Convention Fail?

Despite signing and ratification, the differing political agendas and levels of enforcement of member States make it difficult for international laws to address discrimination and violence against girls. Sometimes, these States will make reservations to the Convention - caveats in international law which allow them to waive certain obligations.

These reservations are important in getting States to ratify a Convention. But they mean that many states can continue to deny basic rights to girls.

What do I do if my country has reservations?

While we advocate for the Convention on the Rights of the Child to be applied in full, in reality, you must obey the laws of the country you are in. We do not encourage you to break a country's laws or put yourself in harm's way.

Although many girls have successfully challenged their country's laws, each circumstance is different. For every girl who has succeeded, there are likely dozens - if not hundreds - more who have not.

The best way to ensure your rights - and to encourage your country to abandon their reservations - is to become an advocate. Work with your local United Nations office, Plan International, or other girls' rights groups to learn how you can safely take action and help continue the fight for your rights.

How does the Convention work?

The guiding principles of the Convention are: non-discrimination; the best interests of the child as a primary consideration in all actions concerning children; the child's inherent right to life, and State Parties' obligation to ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child; and the child's right to express his or her views freely in all matters affecting the child, with those views being given due weight.

The **Committee on the Rights of the Child**, an elected body of independent experts that monitors the Convention's implementation, requires governments that have ratified the Convention to submit regular reports on the status of children's rights in their countries. The Committee reviews these reports and makes recommendations to States. Where necessary, the Committee calls for international assistance from other governments and technical assistance from organizations like UNICEF.

Through its reviews of country reports, the Committee urges all levels of government to use the Convention as a guide in policy-making and implementation, including: having a national plan for children, monitoring how much of the budget is spent on children, conducting regular impact assessments throughout every government department using reliable data about children's lives, and having an independent children's ombudsman.

Your Rights, Explained

The Convention lists the below rights as explicit rights for children, regardless of race or skin color, sex, language, religion, political beliefs, economic status, disability/ability, nationality, or ethnic group. The child's government is responsible for protecting these rights, and the child's family is responsible for helping them achieve their rights.

You have the right to....

- Live.
- A name and a nationality.
- To know and be cared for by your parents.
- An identity, including an official record of your name, nationality, and family.
- To live with your parents, unless that would be bad for you. If you parents are separated, you have the right to be in contact with both of them, unless that would be harmful for you.
- To move so that you can live together with your parents.
- To remain in your country, and not be taken out of it illegally.
- To give your opinion and be taken seriously when important decisions are being made that affect you.
- To find out information and share your ideas through writing, speaking, drawing or any other way, unless it may harm you or anyone else.
- To think for yourself, to choose what you believe and to practice your religion, provided this does not stop other people from enjoying their rights.
- To set up or join a group and to meet together, provided this does not stop other people from enjoying their rights.
- To a private life, without attacks on your character or reputation.

Your Rights, Explained (cont.)

You have the right to....

- To get information that is suitable and beneficial for you from around the world through TV, radio, newspapers, social media, and the Internet.
- Be protected from violence, abuse, or neglect.
- To be cared for by someone else who will respect your culture, religion, and language, if your parents are not able to look after you properly.
- To have your needs take priority if you are adopted.
- To leave your country because you are not safe, and to be protected in your new country.
- To get an education, care and support you need to live a full and independent life to the best of your ability, if you have a mental or physical disability.
- To healthcare and healthy food, clean water, a clean environment and information to help you stay healthy.
- To have your situation regularly reviewed if you are being looked after away from your home.
- To have the conditions you need for your physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.
- To have an education, especially a primary education.
- To have an education that helps you develop your personality, talents, and mental and physical abilities.
- To enjoy your culture, to practice your religion and to speak your language, whether or not these are shared by the majority of people in your country.
- To rest, play, and take part in cultural and artistic activities.
- To not have to do work that is dangerous, harmful to your health or development, or that interferes with your education.
- To be protected from drugs, sexual abuse and exploitation, kidnapping, and other harmful activities by your government.

Your Rights, Explained

You have the right to....

- To keep in touch with your family if you commit a crime and are given a prison sentence. You should not be treated cruelly or placed in prison with adults. You will not be subject to the death penalty or life imprisonment.

Additionally...

- If you are under age 15, you should not have to join the army or fight in a war. Children living in war zones should be given special protection.
- If you have been abused, cruelly treated, or affected by war, you should be given special care to help you recover.
- If you are accused of breaking the law, you should be treated fairly and in a way that respects your dignity. Your age should be taken into account. Prison sentences should only be given where children have committed the most serious crimes.

These rights are a minimum. If the laws in your country give you stronger rights than those outlined by the Convention, then those laws should be followed.

Additionally, if your country has entered reservations to the above rights, you are obliged to follow those reservations by law. For example, some States which ratified included reservations designed to ensure no conflict with existing Constitutions or religious laws.

Please refer to the United Nations website on the Status of the Convention, which is available on their website under “Status of Treaties” for Chapter IV, 11.

Girl Museum

We are the first and only online museum dedicated to girls.

We exhibit, educate, and raise awareness about the unique experience of being born and growing up female around the world in the past and present.

As a community of passionate and creative individuals, we acknowledge and advocate for girls as forces for collective responsibility and change in the global context.

We are a registered 501(c)3 non-profit educational organization.

Learn more and get involved at www.GirlMuseum.org



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Where to Advocate for Girls' Rights

The following organizations help girls and their supporters advocate for greater rights for girls and ensure adherence to the Convention on the Rights of the Child:

- United Nations Girl Up
- Girls Inc.
- School Girls Unite
- Equality Now
- Global Fund for Women
- Plan International
- Men Engage Alliance
- Rise Up
- Promundo
- Amnesty International
- Save the Children
- Human Rights Watch
- Abaad MENA