For Every
For Every Child

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in words and pictures

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Foreword

In this book you will see many pictures of children as they should be—happy, healthy, laughing, learning, holding securely to adults they could trust, who would protect and uphold their inalienable rights—the rights formally laid out in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. These are the rights of all children everywhere and always.

During the Vietnam War, we were shocked by a picture that flashed round the world. It was of a young Vietnamese girl running and screaming. She was naked and ablaze, the target of napalm bombing. The picture captured the ghastliness of war and showed dramatically that the vast bulk of victims of war were innocent unarmed civilians, mainly women and children and the elderly—totally unacceptable targets of the weapons of death and destruction even if they were camouflaged as ‘collateral damage’. They were non-combatants, the vulnerable whom all the conventions governing the conduct of war pronounced as untouchable, a protected species—provisions of those conventions kept far more in the breach than in the observance.

A little later the world saw another picture that was flashed on TV screens and made the pages of most newspapers. It showed a black young man and a black young woman carrying the limp body of a small black boy who had been shot (he died a little later, so the first fatality) by the South African police as young blacks revolted against the oppression and injustice of apartheid, South Africa’s vicious racist system, in the Soweto uprising of 16 June 1976.

There have been other pictures to appall us, showing children as they should not be, hollow eyed and potbellied, as victims of malnutrition, famine and disease; as bewildered refugees fleeing from the violations of their fundamental human rights to a secure home environment, with a country they could call their own. We have seen pictures of children benumbed after witnessing the mass killings of relatives, of parents mown down before their very eyes, children abused and raped and taught to kill as child soldiers, perhaps the ultimate obscenity, when they should have been laughing and playing instead of being trained to mutilate and made to carry guns grotesquely too large for their childish hands.

We are at the beginning of a new millennium. Let us commit ourselves to outlaw the conditions that have made the second kind of pictures possible. The 20th century has been noted for its conflict, bloodshed and strife. Let the 21st century be marked by peace and justice and development. Let us do everything in our power to promote the conditions that make the first kind of pictures, those found in this book, possible.

We each can make a difference if we are vigilant to create a new kind of society, more compassionate, more caring, more sharing where human rights, where children’s rights are respected and protected. Politicians ultimately offer what the people want. Let us tell them we want peace and prosperity for everyone.

Start today. God bless you in the New Millennium.

Archbishop Desmond M. Tutu
Whoever we are, wherever we live, these rights belong to all children under the sun and the moon and the stars, whether we live in cities or towns or villages, or in mountains or valleys or deserts or forests or jungles. Anywhere and everywhere in the big, wide world, these are the rights of every child.
Understand that all children are precious. Pick us up if we fall down and if we are lost lend us your hand. Give us the things we need to make us happy and strong, and always do your best for us whenever we are in your care.
All children should be allowed to live and to grow ... and grow ... and grow ... until we are grown up and can decide things for ourselves.
Max, Zahra, Betty, Juan, Suyin, Reza, Paolo, Yair, Yoko, Mohammed…
Every one of us shall have a name and a land to call our own.
Keep our families together, and if we have no family, look after us and love us just the same.
Allow us to tell you what we are thinking or feeling. Whether our voices are big or small; whether we whisper or shout it, or paint, draw, mime or sign it – listen to us and hear what we say.
No one on Earth has the right to hurt us, not even our mums and dads. Protect us always from anyone who would be cruel.
If we are disabled, either in body or in mind, treasure us especially and give us the care we need to live happily in the world.
Watch over us. Wrap us up against the cold and rain, and give us shade from the hot sun. Make sure we have enough to eat and drink and if we are sick, nurse and comfort us.
Teach us all to read and write and teach us well so we grow up to be the best we can at whatever we wish to do. Take care of our Earth – the flowers, the trees, the rivers, the seas – and teach us how to care for it in our turn.
All children shall have time to play and time to rest when we are tired.
In times of war do not make us part of any battle, but shelter us and protect us from all harm.
Allow us to say our own prayers in our own words, whether in churches or temples, synagogues or mosques, chapels or shrines or any other place a prayer may be said to our own God. And let us sing and dance and dress in the ways of our own people.
Do your best to let everyone know that, whoever we are, wherever we live, these are the rights of every child.
THE RIGHTS FEATURED IN THIS BOOK FROM THE UN COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

ARTICLE 2: Non-discrimination
1. States Parties shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction without discrimination of any kind, irrespective of the child’s or his or her parent’s or legal guardian’s race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or social opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status.
2. States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that the child is protected against all forms of discrimination or punishment on the basis of the status, activities, expressed opinions, or beliefs of the child’s parents, legal guardians, or family members.

ARTICLE 3: Best interests of the child
1. In all actions concerning children, whether undertaken by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies, the best interests of the child shall be a primary consideration.
2. States Parties shall ensure that the child is protected and care as is necessary for his or her well-being, taking into account the rights and duties of his or her parents, legal guardians, or other individuals legally responsible for him or her, and, to this end, shall take all appropriate legislative and administrative measures.
3. States Parties shall ensure that the institutions, services and facilities responsible for the care or protection of children shall conform with the standards established by competent authorities, particularly in the areas of safety, health, in the number and suitability of their staff as well as competent supervision.

ARTICLE 4: Survival and development
1. States Parties recognize that every child has the inherent right to life.
2. States Parties shall ensure to the maximum extent possible the survival and development of the child.

ARTICLE 7: Name and nationality
1. The child shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have the right to a name, a right to acquire and, as far as possible, a right to know and to be cared for by his or her parents.
2. States Parties shall ensure the implementation of those rights in accordance with their national laws and their obligations under the relevant international instruments in this field, in particular where the child would otherwise be stateless.

ARTICLE 9: Separation from parents
1. States Parties shall ensure that the child shall not be separated from his or her parents against their will, except when competent authorities subject to judicial review determine, in accordance with applicable law and procedures, that such separation is necessary for the best interests of the child. Such determination may be necessary in a particular case such as one involving abuse or neglect of the child by the parents, or one where the living arrangements and a decision must be made as to the child’s place of residence.
2. In any proceeding pursuant to paragraph 1 of the present article, all interested parties shall be given an opportunity to participate in the proceedings and make their views known.
3. States Parties shall respect the right of any child who is separated from one or both parents to maintain personal relations and direct contact with both parents on a regular basis, except if it is contrary to the best interests.