

# Convention on the Rights of the Child



ChildFund International, formerly Christian Children’s Fund, works in 31 countries worldwide to help communities uphold the rights of the child and ensure that children can grow and thrive, strongly encourages the U.S. to ratify the proposed treaty. By doing so, the U.S. would not only demonstrate its principles as a country, but also exercise global leadership on this critical issue for children, who hold the key to our common global future. The treaty has been ratified by all of the countries in which ChildFund International works and all of the countries where ChildFund sponsors live, except the United States.

## The Issue

- The Convention on the Rights of the Child is the first legally binding international instrument to incorporate the full range of human rights — civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights. In 1989, world leaders decided that children needed a special convention just for them because people under 18 years old often need special care and protection that adults do not. The leaders also wanted to make sure that the world recognized that children have human rights.
- The U.N. General Assembly adopted the Convention and opened it for signature on Nov. 20 1989, the 30th anniversary of its Declaration of the Rights of the Child. It came into force on Sept. 2, 1990, after it was ratified by the required number of nations. As of December 2008, 193 countries have ratified it, including every member of the United Nations except the United States and Somalia.
- The four core principles of the Convention are non-discrimination; devotion to the best interests of the child; the right to life, survival and development; and respect for the views of the child.
- The Convention on the Rights of the Child reinforces fundamental human dignity. Because of its near-universal acceptance by the community of nations, the Convention on the Rights of the Child has brought into sharp focus for the first time the fundamental human dignity of all children and the urgency of ensuring their well-being and development.
- It highlights and defends the family's role in children's lives. The Convention specifically refers to the family as the fundamental group of society and the natural environment for the growth and well-being of its members, particularly children.
- The Convention seeks respect for children – but not at the expense of human rights or responsibilities of others. It states that children have a right to express their views and to have their views taken seriously, but it does not state that children's views are the only ones to be considered.
- It endorses the principle of non-discrimination. The principle of non-discrimination is included in all the basic human rights instruments and has been carefully defined by the bodies responsible for monitoring their implementation.
- It establishes clear obligations. Prior to or shortly after ratifying the Convention on the Rights of the Child, countries are required to bring their national legislation into line with its provisions – except where the national standards are already higher. In this way, child rights standards are no longer merely an aspiration but, rather, are nationally binding on countries.

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## Recent History

- Former Secretary of State Madeline Albright signed the Convention on behalf of President Clinton, putting it on track for ratification, but it did not pass the U.S. Senate. Ratifying the treaty requires 2/3 approval from the Senate.
- The U.S. did ratify the CRC's two optional protocols in 2002: the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography; and the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict.
- The President Obama administration is reviving efforts to ratify the treaty. U.S. ambassador to the U.N., Susan Rice said in June 2009 that the administration is discussing when and how it might be possible to ratify the Convention.

## ChildFund International: What We Do

- ChildFund International serves as a voice for child rights and child protection and partners extensively with agencies such as UNICEF and UNHCR that take a rights-based approach.
- ChildFund plays a lead role in building local child protection networks and participates in national networks and advocacy work aiming to protect children's rights on a national scale.
- ChildFund International is a child protection agency. By integrating child protection into long-term programs, we are strengthening development work and expanding impact by participating fully in the international human rights discourse and system.
- We work with children to actively provide them with opportunities to share their experiences and use their viewpoints to direct and design our interventions, programs and evaluations of programs.
- Children's development and achievement of their rights are essential parts of the foundation for societal development.

## ChildFund International's Stance

- ChildFund International, which works in 31 countries worldwide to help communities uphold the rights of the child and ensure that children can grow and thrive, strongly encourages the U.S. to sign the proposed treaty. By doing so, the U.S. would not only demonstrate its principles as a country, but also exercise global leadership on this critical issue for children, who hold the key to our common global future.
- The Convention on the Rights of the Children is a very important legal instrument for our work. It's the most comprehensive convention covering all aspects of a child's life.
- The international Convention on the Rights of the Child sets an unprecedented global vision and standard for children's lives worldwide.
- The Convention recognizes children as human beings with full rights to survival, development, protection and participation, all of which are very important to us. Children are not passive recipients of charity or property of their parents.
- The Convention on the Rights of the Children recognizes that rights and responsibilities are key to how we should be working with communities and children. A rights-based approach to programming recognizes families' responsibilities to their children, communities and states responsibilities to their residents.