



African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) “Children’s Charter”

Teacher Notes

In 1990, the Organisation of African Unity, which later became the African Union, wrote the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. They felt that more protection for the rights of children as well as attention called to responsibilities and African values was needed.

A “right” is something that every child has. They are the things that all children are allowed to do. One child’s rights cannot take away from another person’s, adult’s or child’s, rights. When a child is young, adults must help make decisions for the child. Adults must think about what is best for the child not just what the child or adult wants. As a child gets older, she or he has more responsibilities and will be able to make more decisions about his or her rights. Governments and adults have requirements to protect children’s rights. These requirements are also listed in the law.

Article numbers are listed below with an explanation of the article.

1. Countries must enact this law. This law is more important than all customs and traditions that go against this law.
2. A child is a person younger than 18 years old.
3. Every child has these rights, no matter what they look like, where they live, what religion or tribe they belong to, whether they are a boy or girl, or who their parents are and what they do.
4. Adults must do what is best for the child. They should ask for the child’s opinion when making decisions.
5. Children have a right to live and grow up. They cannot be killed even if they commit a crime.
6. Every child is allowed to have a name and a country, where they are registered with the government.
7. Children are allowed to say what they think as long as they are not hurting anyone.
8. Children can gather in groups as long as they are peaceful groups.
9. Children are allowed to believe in a religion that they choose. Parents must help them learn values and right & wrong.
10. Children have the right to privacy.
11. Children have the right to be educated in order to develop their talents. This education should include good African morals and traditions. They should be taught how to get along with other people from different cultures or tribes, how to take care of the environment, and how to be healthy. If a girl becomes pregnant, she has the right to go back to school after the baby is born.
12. Children have the right to play and to make art.

13. Children who have a disability have a right to special help so that they can participate in the community and be able to get an education.
14. Children have a right to medical help and clean water so that they stay healthy.
15. Children cannot be abused when they work. They cannot do work that harms them or prevents them from going to school or growing in mind and body.
16. No one may abuse or torture a child.
17. Children who have committed crimes may not be tortured. They may not be housed with adult criminals. In court, children must be proven guilty of the crime.
18. Parents are responsible for taking care of their children.
19. Children have a right to live with their parents unless it is dangerous. If a child is not living with his or her parents, she or he has the right to spend time with his or her parents.
20. Parents and the government are responsible for taking care of the child's needs as they grow up. Discipline cannot be harmful to the child.
21. The government must stop traditional practices that hurt children, such as child marriage.
22. Governments must protect children from being in war. Children cannot be soldiers.
23. Governments must protect children who have left their homes as refugees. The governments must help them find their family if they are separated or lost.
24. Adoptions of children must be carefully planned by the government and organizations to make sure that children will be safe and loved in their new families.
25. Children should be placed in safe, caring, family-like homes until the children can be reunited with their families.
26. Children must be protected from being treated unfairly or differently from others because of apartheid and discrimination.
27. Children must be protected from sexual abuse, for example, sexual exploitation and pornography.
28. Children must be protected from harmful drug use and the drug trade.
29. Children cannot be sold by anyone including parents. Children may not work as beggars.
30. Children cannot live in prison just because their mother is imprisoned. The government must find other ways for the child to be cared for and the mother to have correction.
31. Children have responsibilities to society.
 - They must work to keep the family together and respect parents, superiors and elders. When there are tough times, children need to help their families and communities.
 - They must use their talents to help the community and nation.
 - They must help unify the community and nation.
 - They must learn and live African cultural values, especially making sure respect, understand, and work with others, who may be different than oneself, to make peaceful strong communities and nations.

Child Protection Toolkit

- They must help strengthen their country so that it can be independent, strong, and good.
- They must support and be proud of African Unity.

32 - 48. These articles explain how the government and the African Union will protect these rights for children.