INTRODUCING CHILDREN’S RIGHTS

Goals: To familiarise participants with the background and content of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC); to learn about the different types of rights that apply to children and the comprehensive range of rights covered by the CRC.

Materials:
- Handout #3, Factfile: The Convention on the Rights of the Child
- Handout #2, Summary of the CRC or Handout #1, full text of the CRC
- Writing materials or scissors

Procedure:

1. Introduce the unit by asking participants to define “rights”.

   If participants are not familiar with the term “rights”, explain that rights can be thought of as those basic standards that are necessary in order for human beings to live in dignity and freedom. Rights belong to all human beings at all times, under any circumstances. Rights ensure that everyone is able to realise their full potential, and rights limit governments’ power over the lives, property and activities of its citizens.

2. Explain that the United Nations created the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) to set forth the rights held by all children around the world. Explain to the group what a convention is, and how the CRC came about. Use Handout #3, “Factfile: The Convention on the Rights of the Child,” as a resource, or copy this document and distribute it to the participants to read.

3. Describe to the group the four broad categories of rights covered by the CRC:

   1. **Survival rights** include the child’s right to life and the needs that are most basic to existence;
   2. **Development rights** include those things that children require in order to reach their fullest potential;
   3. **Protection rights** specify all forms of abuse, neglect or exploitation that children have a right to be protected from. Protection rights also specify groups of children who are in need of special care;
   4. **Participation rights** allow children to play an active role in their own lives, communities, and nations.

4. Have participants form groups of four. Distribute a copy of the “Summary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child” to each group. (Older participants may use the full text.) Ask them to read each article and decide which category it belongs to. Articles that do not clearly fall into one of the four categories described above may be grouped separately.

Participants may write the name of the category next to each article, or cut the articles into individual slips of paper and arrange them into four groups.
Learning Activity #3

Variation for younger students: Focus only on articles 1 through 41. Articles 1 through 5 and Article 41 deal with foundation principles such as the definition of a child, the principle of non-discrimination, etc., and thus will not fall clearly into one of the four categories. Articles 42 through 54 deal with technical matters of implementation and entry into force.

Variation for adults and older students: The CRC is the first legally binding treaty to address the full range of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. Older students may categorise the articles of the CRC based on these types of rights.

Discussion:
- Do you agree that there was a need for a special convention covering children’s rights? Why or why not?
- What types of rights fell into each of the four categories? Does the CRC appear to emphasise certain types of rights over others?
- Were there some rights that seemed to belong to more than one category? To none of the four categories? Which ones? Why?

Follow-up activities:

1. The CRC defines a child as any person under the age of 18. At what age do young people in your country acquire rights (for example, the right to vote, join organizations, attend school, leave school, marry, drink alcohol, join the armed forces, work, drive a car)? Do you think these age limits are reasonable?

2. Have participants consider what responsibilities young people have in relation to specific rights. (Emphasise that responsibilities are not duties that must be fulfilled before one can claim rights. However, claiming rights implies taking on responsibilities, including the responsibility to respect the rights of others.) Do schools place more emphasis on young people’s rights or responsibilities? Why? What about families? Your community? Your country? Are there benefits to placing limitations on the exercise of certain types of rights? Are there risks?

Source: Adapted from TeachUNICEF.