

Principles & Tools for Child-friendly Churches

Churches uniting for children in the pilgrimage of justice and peace



World Council
of Churches



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To: members of the World Council
of Churches central committee

“The movement of love which is essential to the Triune God manifests itself in the promise of justice and peace. They are signs of God’s reign to come which is already visible here and now wherever reconciliation and healing are seen. Christians are to partake in these signs of God’s reign and to struggle for them in response to God’s will and promise.”

An Invitation to the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace¹
2–8 July, 2014

Dear Sisters and Brothers in Christ,

On our pilgrimage of justice and peace, children walk alongside us. They are part of our families, households, congregations and societies. As we move forward on our pilgrimage, we take this moment to recognize God’s particular “movement of love” in our relationships with children and to recognize they are essential to the life of churches and the world.

Celebrating the Gifts

Children are created in the image of God with a full measure of that image from their very beginning (Genesis 1:27). Children are not partial people; they are fully human and worthy of dignity and respect, regardless of their age, race, religion, gender, class, capacities or accomplishments.

Jesus called for his followers to “love your neighbour as yourself” and extended this love to everyone, including children. He welcomed, touched, healed and blessed children and lifted them up as signs of God’s reign. In as much as we can change and become humble like them, Jesus tells us, we will enter the reign of God (Matthew 18:2–5). His embrace of children as part of his ministry is a model for us to engage children appropriately in all aspects of Christian life.

As followers of Jesus, we understand that “loving the neighbour” requires that we seek justice. Many biblical passages command this explicitly with particular reference to widows, orphans and strangers--the most vulnerable and voiceless people in society (e.g., Deuteronomy 10:17-19). Thus, caring for children in need is non-negotiable, an integral part of seeking justice.

As we strive to respect, love and seek justice for children, we are called to honour their gifts, strengths and contributions. Children bring us joy and delight; they offer love generously. The Holy Spirit moves within them, and they are able to praise and worship God (Matthew 21:16). They have growing capacities and responsibilities and are called to serve others and to care for creation.

¹WCC Central Committee document Nr. GEN 05, 2014

We rejoice therefore that churches have nurtured and honored children, supporting them through local congregations, grassroots initiatives or international faith-based organizations. Christians have recognized the positive contributions of children as integral part of their homes, communities and the world. Indeed, for many children and young people, their faith in God and involvement with churches have given them hope, a sense of purpose and the strength to thrive and serve others.

Visiting the Wounds

Even as we acknowledge our positive contributions to the lives of children, we confess we have also fallen short. Many Christians have harmed children and failed to act on their behalf. Recognizing that children face a range of serious challenges in diverse contexts around the world, we share with you from our hearts three particular wounds that churches must address urgently.

We repent of the ways in which Christians and churches have participated in violence against children, whether in our homes, churches or larger society. All forms of violence against children — individual or structural neglect, sexual, physical or verbal abuse — are completely antithetical to God's will revealed in Holy Scripture and the life and teaching of Jesus Christ. The spiritual and psychic damage children incur from such abuse and victimization cannot be denied and is inexcusable, invoking the condemnation of Christ (Matthew 18:6). Any and all ways Christians seek to honour, support and engage children turn to ash if within our own churches and communities, we do not protect children from harm or abuse.

We repent that all too often we have not honoured children's due dignity, contributions, voices and spiritual wisdom. We often marginalize them, as if they have little or nothing to contribute to the life of households, churches, communities and society. Even as we seek to talk about God's love with children when we are "at home and away," when we "lie down and rise" (Deuteronomy 6:7), we often view them solely as recipients of teaching and care and not agents of change with their own relationships with God. Without providing secure and welcoming spaces where the voices of children are heard and the agency of children is recognized and encouraged, churches risk being unfaithful to the example and teaching of Christ (Luke 2:41–52; 9:46–48).

We repent for failing to address the basic needs of children, jeopardizing their very survival, failing to provide them with adequate health care, food, water, air and shelter. We place other priorities ahead of helping children cultivate loving and meaningful relationships with family members, the wider village it takes to raise a child, and the natural world. We threaten the ability of children and all living things to flourish through neglect and exploitation of our planet: climate change, loss of biodiversity and the pollution of air, water and soil endanger children and families around the world.

Transforming the Injustices

Through God's forgiveness and grace we are continually being renewed and empowered to heal these wounds, strengthen efforts on behalf of children and create positive transformation. Christian communities—of whatever size, shape or wealth—can and must stand vigilant against the exploitation of children within our spheres of influence. Churches have already made available clear teachings regarding the bodily integrity of children, expectations of children's treatment in homes and congregations and best practices for child protection. May we take up these best practices, and as Jesus found safety in Egypt as an infant, may the world's children find sanctuary and hospitality in the household of the Christian community (Matthew 2:13–21).

Children's need to be nurtured and protected as well as heard and respected calls forth the best in us — "love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control" (Galatians 5:22–23). As God knows each by name and "knit together" each of us in the womb (Psalm 139:13), let us ensure every girl or boy is honoured and welcomed into the security of family and community. Let us advocate that homes, congregations, schools and neighbourhoods be spaces where children are heard, are respected as agents of change and are secure in their physical, emotional and spiritual needs.

As Christian communities work to ensure children's survival and to repair the tapestry of creation, we remember the abundance God prepared for all living things at the beginning of the world. Let us restore children to nature - ensuring

access, enjoyment and participation in its healing. And let us restore nature to children - protecting ecosystems and biodiversity, and reducing our environmental footprint on the earth. In this labour of transformation, let us acknowledge with the psalmist, “The earth is the Lord’s and all that is in it” (Psalm 24:1). The needs of humanity and all living things have been provided for us by our Creator—may we be faithful stewards of this bounty.

Recognizing the various gifts, failures, and capacities for transformation among churches worldwide, let us move forward in our pilgrimage of justice and peace with children in these and other ways. Churches around the world will move forward faced with diverse challenges and equipped with unique resources. To focus and strengthen all of our efforts on their behalf and with partners of good will, we offer the following ‘Principles and Tools for Child-Friendly Churches’.

“Walking side by side with one another, we [invite] others to go with us for the healing and reconciliation of this suffering and conflict-stricken world.”

*An Invitation to the Pilgrimage of Justice and Peace
2–8 July, 2014*

Yours in Christ,



Rev. Dr Olav Fykse Tveit
General Secretary

Introduction

On our pilgrimage of justice and peace, children walk alongside us. Recognizing them not only as precious gifts, but as agents of change, we are encouraged to:

- Celebrate the many gifts we receive through children and the role played by churches throughout the centuries in protecting and nurturing them;
- Visit the many wounds in the lives of children and in our failure to address their basic needs;
- Participate in joint efforts to transform injustices into acts of justice.

The present document has been developed as a joint response to this proposed transformation. A transformation to stimulate action with and for children by WCC member churches.

Objectives

We seek to strengthen our commitment to children as part of our common pilgrimage for justice and peace by:

- Supporting efforts by churches to prioritize children through a series of proposed common Principles for churches to uphold;
- Raising awareness of the resonance between the responsibilities towards children Christians bear, and children's rights as expressed in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child;
- Promoting collaborative efforts to improve children's lives by sharing experiences and skills among WCC members and partner organizations.

Objective 1: Supporting efforts by churches to prioritize children through a series of proposed Principles for churches to uphold

The urgent need for joint efforts to address the challenges children face has been raised previously in the WCC's history (see Annexes document). Three major consultations with children were held in the 1990s. The first one was held in 1996 in Geneva, and focused on the needs of street children. Children living on the streets were given the floor, and they described their hope for churches to play a greater role in protecting and supporting children: "We, the children of the world (...) cannot overstate the urgency to engage in direct, immediate and drastic action to help our suffering peers around the world". Unfortunately, their pleas went unanswered – a result of conflicting priorities and insufficient institutional resources.

In 2013, when the 10th Assembly of the World Council of Churches invited all member churches to join the pilgrimage of justice and peace, one of the 22 working groups at the Assembly was dedicated to children. Participants from 38 member churches and partner organizations developed a joint declaration, Putting Children at the Centre, which was signed by 18 member churches and ecumenical partners of the WCC.

This expression of intent outlined the need to place a greater focus on children, calling upon the WCC to support member churches in doing so. While the declaration remains sound, it lacked an operational plan to translate intent into action.

Today, we have a new, real and tangible opportunity to promote lasting and sustainable support for children.

Following up on the expression of intent from the 10th Assembly, in September 2015 the WCC signed a global partnership with UNICEF. Enhancing the capacity of WCC member churches to protect and support children both within their communities and in society at large is one of the key areas of the partnership's focus.

The main focus of this collaboration has been to build on existing expertise and develop ideas within the WCC fellowship of churches and ecumenical partners. Through a broad consultative process within the WCC's constituency and partners, a set of three "Principles for Child-friendly Churches" has been developed.

Steps to developing the Principles

The drafting of these Principles was initiated by one of the working groups of the WCC Commission of the Churches on International Affairs (CCIA). This CCIA working group was supported by experts from member churches, UNICEF and other child-focused partner organizations. Together, they formed the Core Group of Experts (see Annexes document for the list of the group active members) whose mission was to draft the Principles. The Core Group of Experts regularly consulted a larger network of professionals from partner organizations, both church-based and secular, known as the Advisory Group of Experts (see Annexes document for the list of the group active members).

A seminar with 90 participants was held in November 2015 to review a draft of the Principles. As a result of their recommendations, two additional consultations were organized. These were made up of:

- Children and young people in member church communities: a total of 144 children from parishes in 6 countries were directly consulted on the draft Principles between March and May 2015. Their contribution has been truly valued and their opinions and suggestions have been fully integrated into the final version of the Principles;
- A group of 13 theologians from around the world has carefully drafted the letter that is accompanying this document, explaining from a theological perspective the need to prioritize children and young people (see Annexes document a full list of the theologians who worked on this process).

As a result of the many avenues of collaboration, not only were the Principles developed, but many useful tools were assembled to help churches engage for and with children.

What does it mean for a church to commit to the Principles?

The Principles are aimed at church leaders, pastors, church-workers, catechists, parents, caregivers, households and church members. Church communities are encouraged to adopt them for dissemination and implementation, and to discuss them within decision-making bodies. By upholding these Principles, churches take a major step forward in their pilgrimage toward justice and peace with and on behalf of children.

The Principles have been developed to reflect the needs at the grassroots level across cities, villages and rural areas throughout the world. Churches endorsing the Principles can choose to focus on one or multiple Principles, opting, for example, to address the one that responds to the most urgent challenges faced by children in their own local contexts.

As mentioned in the letter accompanying this document, the Principles for Child-friendly Churches focus on the three general "wounds" that churches must address urgently, outlining specific actions and strategies that any church can put in place in response to pressing challenges faced by children worldwide. The Principles and related tools were developed to support churches in transforming these injustices.

Objective 2: Raising awareness of the resonance between the responsibilities towards children Christians bear, and children's rights as expressed in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child²

Christians worldwide are already on this journey with children, working with and on their behalf in diverse contexts. Christians address children's needs not only within their own households and congregations, but in schools, the broader community and beyond their borders. Furthermore, Christian communities do not do this work alone, but often partner with a variety of religious, secular and governmental organizations. Some Christian communities have – alone or with

² <http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>

other partners – worked to promote, encourage and emphasize the importance of legislation to protect children on all relevant levels.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is the foundation upon which any action for and with children should be based. The CRC is a groundbreaking international legal treaty that expresses in rights-based language the needs and strengths of children, defined as persons up to the age of 18 years. The Convention articulates children's rights to basic needs, such as health, water, food, shelter, education and affection, acknowledging their own role as agents of change and active participants in their communities. The standards of the CRC were negotiated over a ten-year period by governments, non-governmental organizations, human rights advocates, lawyers, health specialists, social workers, educators, child development experts and religious leaders from all over the world. The result is a consensus document that takes into account the importance of tradition and cultural values for the protection and harmonious development of the child. Since its adoption in 1989, the CRC has been ratified by 196 nations.

Even though Christian ideas about human dignity and equality have strongly shaped the language of human rights in the CRC and other human rights documents, not all Christians working with and on behalf of children are familiar or comfortable with language underscoring children's rights. Christians generally care deeply about children and do much to protect and nurture them, but while some are familiar with the CRC and believe it corresponds well with their faith, others do not see how the CRC's language of rights dovetails with Christian beliefs and values, and they reject it altogether. Still others have not heard about the CRC, nor had the opportunity to reflect either on children's rights or the churches' responsibilities towards children. By familiarizing themselves with the contents of the CRC, churches can speak to broader publics about prioritizing children and strengthen efforts with and on behalf of children in a variety of contexts—whether in neighbourhoods, schools, or national and international debates.

The Principles are therefore based on the recognition that children have rights and are agents of change who should be raised in the spirit of peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom, equality and solidarity, as set forth in the CRC.

Several scholars have already underscored the relationship between biblical commitments to children and the language of children's rights.³ The "Resources and tools" section of this document provides background material about the CRC and references documents that outline positive relationships between biblical perspectives and child rights. We hope that these will be useful in supporting churches' efforts for children.

Objective 3: Promoting collaborative efforts to improve children's and adolescents' lives by sharing experiences and skills among WCC members and partner organizations.

The Principles aim to help each and every church strengthen efforts on behalf of children, from local grassroots initiatives to WCC-led programmes. They are meant to serve as a convening platform upon which communities of faith can explore common goals and the guidance to work towards them. In the implementation of the Principles, churches may identify strengths and weaknesses. Churches are therefore invited to engage in collaborative efforts and learn from one another. By coming together to implement the Principles, churches may overcome perceived barriers to their unity.

Many have contributed to the development of the Principles as part of the Core or Advisory Group of Experts. These groups, along with UNICEF, are available to help guide churches who encounter difficulties along the road to implementing the Principles on behalf of children, as well as to connect churches so that they may learn from one another.

When they embark on this pilgrimage of justice and peace for and with children, churches are encouraged to collect the fruits of their efforts in their "backpack" and share these with other churches. The success of these initiatives will

³ See for example, Kathleen Marshall and Paul Parvis, *Honouring Children: The Human Rights of the Child in Christian Perspective* (St Andrew Press: 2004); Don S. Browning and John Witte, "Christianity's Mixed Contributions to Children's Rights: Traditional Teachings, Modern Doubts," in *Children, Adults, and Shared Responsibilities: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Perspectives*, edited by Marcia Bunge (Cambridge University Press, 2012).

multiply when WCC members and partners share the experience, skills and results of their pilgrimage for justice and peace for and with children. For this reason, monitoring, evaluation and reporting by churches is greatly encouraged along this common journey.

A web-based platform for exchanges between member churches and partners is planned to guide these efforts in 2017.

The drafting and consultative process to develop these Principles was coordinated by Frederique Seidel, WCC Special Advisor on Child Rights and Caterina Tino, UNICEF Partnership Specialist. If you would like to provide feedback or suggestions for further improvements to the Principles you are encouraged to write to frederique.seidel@wcc.coe.org and/or ctino@unicef.org.

Principles for Child-friendly Churches

Children are among the most vulnerable members of society, yet they also have enormous potential to contribute to peace and justice. Inspired by the biblical mandate to transform injustice in whatever form it occurs, churches have a duty to protect and care for children.

The following Principles for Child-friendly Churches are based on the recognition that children are subjects of rights and agents of change who should be brought up in the spirit of peace, dignity, tolerance, freedom, equality and solidarity, as set forth in the Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC)⁴.

Churches endorsing the Principles commit to:

- Promote awareness and understanding about the rights of children and adolescents, and their resonance with Christian theology that places children at the centre of family and community life (e.g. by displaying the CRC on church message boards);
- Advocate for legislation and policies that support the rights of children and adolescents. This applies particularly to churches that are already engaged in the promotion of children and adolescents' rights;
- Hold governments accountable to implement the rights of children and adolescents (e.g. churches gather data and document the situation of children and adolescents, alert media, engage in advocacy, etc.);
- Explore opportunities for local and national education partnerships to raise the profile of child and adolescent rights, and engage with media to build awareness. Toward this end, it is effective to engage children and adolescents to share their own views with the media, creating opportunities to portray children and adolescents as champions of the CRC.

The Principles

- 1. Promote child protection through church communities**
 - a) Ensure a child-safe church environment
 - b) Contribute to ending violence against children and adolescents in society at large
 - c) Support child protection in emergencies
 - d) Advocate for children's and adolescents' rights through birth registration
- 2. Promote meaningful participation by children and adolescents**
 - a) Promote meaningful participation by children and adolescents in church activities and worship
 - b) Advocate for the recognition of children and adolescents as actors of change in society at large
- 3. Raise church voices for intergenerational climate justice, supporting initiatives for and with children and adolescents**
 - a) Promote systems and behaviours that are eco-friendly and adaptive to the impacts of climate change within the church
 - b) Advocate for systems and behaviours that are eco-friendly and adaptive to the impacts of climate change in society at large

⁴ <http://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/crc.aspx>

1 - Promote child protection through church communities

Churches endorsing the Principles seek to monitor the wellbeing of children and adolescents in their community and in their societies. Church leaders can strengthen child protection efforts/mechanisms by emphasizing the link between child and adolescent rights and the teachings of Scripture. By raising awareness of these rights from a theological perspective, they also empower children to seek help when they need protection.

1 a) Ensure a child-safe church environment

Throughout the world, many children have been victimized by abuse and sexual exploitation. Some are harassed or touched in inappropriate ways. Others are victims of incest, rape or exploitation in prostitution or pornography. This tragic reality may occur in homes, schools, care and justice institutions, the workplace, in travel and tourism facilities, and within communities at large. Increasingly, the internet and mobile phones put children at risk of sexual exploitation and abuse.

Although evidence shows that the majority of the victims are girls, both boys and girls, of all ages and backgrounds, are vulnerable to sexual exploitation and abuse. Often the perpetrators of sexual abuse and/or sexual exploitation are persons known to and trusted by the child, including parents and other caretakers, relatives and neighbours.

Churches endorsing the Principles will either already have or make it a priority to develop and implement a child safeguarding policy, based on existing expertise in this area.⁵ The policy and related procedures should encompass:

- The design of activities;
- Recruitment practices for and training of personnel (clergy, employees and volunteers);
- A code of conduct (including a child-friendly code of conduct) for clergy, employees, volunteers as well as children and adolescents;
- Child-friendly procedures to report an incident or a referral mechanism to ensure that action is taken in cases of suspected child abuse;
- The adoption of specific mechanisms to ensure children understand behaviour to be expected from church clergy, employees and volunteers, and how to report abuse should they suffer or witness it (e.g. training for children).

The leadership of churches endorsing the Principles commits to:

- Promote the participation of children and adolescents in developing the child safeguarding policy;
- Appoint a focal point for confidential support, to be made available for child and adolescent victims of violence;
- Explore the most appropriate peer review mechanism to evaluate the policy's effectiveness and take action as needed;
- Form an advisory committee to promote a child-safe church environment, which envisions the inclusion of children and adolescents. These provide a space for church personnel (clergy, employees and volunteers), children and adolescents and their families/caregivers to discuss the risks of violence against children and adolescents, including physical abuse, neglect, emotional abuse, family violence, sexual abuse, bullying and online risks;
- Pay special attention to the protection of children with disabilities;
- Consider appointing child mentors and family mentors in the development of a child-friendly environment;
- Equip personnel, volunteers and community members with information on preventive measures (see the "Resources and tools" section accompanying this document);
- Consider existing good practices for mechanisms to monitor child protection standards and tailor these to specific contexts.

⁵ It is recommended to consider existing tools such as [Child Safeguarding Policy and Child Safeguarding Guidance](#) and the [Framework and Standards](#) – Safe Church Training Agreement (National Council of Churches Australia)

1 b) Contribute to ending violence against children and adolescents in society at large

Witnessing or experiencing emotional, sexual or physical violence affects a child's health, wellbeing and future. Violence against children includes: violent discipline and psychological punishment at home or in school; physical violence; neglect; bullying in person or online; and sexual violence in the home, school or community.

Violence harms not only children and families, but impacts entire societies. Its consequences can obstruct economic growth due to lost productivity, disability, and decreased quality of life – all of which can hold a nation back from fully developing. These consequences are passed down from one generation to the next.

At no time or place is violence against children ever acceptable, nor can it be justified. Protecting children from violence requires a comprehensive approach, since many types of violence are catalysed by other factors, including poverty, discrimination, conflict, lack of education, and harmful social norms.

Churches endorsing the Principles will serve as safe spaces for all children and adolescents, and should be equipped with information on how to support and refer girls and boys who are victims of violence. They will actively contribute to the attainment of Sustainable Development Goals 16.2 (End abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children) and 5.3 (Eliminate all harmful practices, such as child, early and forced marriage and female genital mutilation), promoting awareness about the risks and consequences of violence against children and adolescents.

Churches adhering to the Principles aspire to play a significant role in creating a protective and supportive society that respects child rights and strengthens child protection mechanisms along with other partners – including other faith groups, local institutions, government and children and adolescents themselves. They commit to:

- Challenge behaviours and attitudes towards children and adolescents that can cause harm and violence;
- Value and treat boys and girls with equal respect, as created in the image of God;
- Recognizing that a loving family environment is the best place for the full and harmonious development of a child, but that the home can be a place where children experience violence and abuse, churches commit to support and promote positive parenting and community awareness and education to prevent physical, sexual and emotional abuse, neglect, family violence, and bullying and online risks;
- Promote non-violent discipline and the prohibition of corporal punishment of children and adolescents as a key strategy towards ending other forms of violence against children and adolescents;
- Address harmful traditional practices which may be related to socio-cultural and religious beliefs, including female genital mutilation/cutting, early marriage, gender-based violence, and corporal punishment;
- Advocate for effective prevention of violence against children and adolescents through legal, policy and institutional frameworks, and champion rights-based approaches that hold duty bearers to account for the provision of services that protect children and adolescents from violence;
- Consider contributing to alternative reports of the Committee on the Right of the Child and the Universal Periodic Review;
- Advocate for and join campaigns that raise awareness and challenge violence against girls, boys and women (e.g. [Thursdays in Black](#), [19 days of activism](#)).

1 c) Support child protection in emergencies

In emergency situations resulting from conflict or natural disaster, children face extreme risk of violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect. Armed conflict and natural disasters force millions of children and their families to flee their homes. As a consequence, children are often separated from their families, lacking their protection

at the moment they need it most. Displacement and separation of families and communities also place women and girls at increased risk of violence and abuse. Added to these risks, militarization, deteriorating living conditions, loss of livelihoods and lack of access to services – including health care and education – can have both immediate and long-term consequences for children, families and communities and their ability to live in dignity.

Churches endorsing the Principles show their willingness to help protect children and adolescents in emergencies by undertaking preparedness and preventative measures. Furthermore, their response is coordinated with relevant stakeholder in the event of conflict and natural disasters.

To coordinate the work of churches in humanitarian settings the global ACT Alliance (“Action by Churches Together”) was formed in 2010. ACT Forums at national and regional levels should be contacted by WCC member churches to engage in emergency preparedness. The ACT Alliance is committed to working ecumenically, collaborating with all those who share similar objectives. Country-based ACT Alliance forums⁶ collaborate with the broader ecumenical family, including churches that are not members of the alliance, as well as other stakeholders in humanitarian preparedness and response. Churches endorsing the Principles may contact country-based ACT Forums where these exist (see <http://actalliance.org/about/forums/>) or the regional ACT Secretariat focal point (<http://actalliance.org/about/secretariat/>) to ensure their child protection efforts are coordinated within the broader ecumenical response.

Churches endorsing the Principles recognize they have a moral obligation to care for children in need during emergencies and their aftermath. Together with other relevant actors, they seek to build the capacity of staff and community groups to protect children and adolescents in emergencies in accordance with the Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action (see the “Resources and tools” section accompanying this document). More concretely, they commit to:

- Provide psychosocial support to children and adolescents;
- Use their voice to call upon governments to fulfil their obligation to protect children and adolescents in emergencies;
- Support non-state groups to fulfil their obligations to protect children and adolescents in emergencies;
- Actively involve adolescents and youth to play a role in minimizing risks during emergencies;
- Engage in interfaith dialogue to strengthen social cohesion for the protection of children and adolescents.

1 d) Advocate for children’s and adolescents’ rights through birth registration

Every child has an inherent, God given dignity. Yet for children to be visible in the eyes of the law, birth registration is a critical administrative step through which each child is granted his or her first form of legal identity. This legal recognition assists them to go to school, get medical treatment, apply for a job as an adult, own property, vote, etc. Without a birth certificate children and adolescents – especially those living at the margins of society – may be denied these basic rights. Furthermore, without a legal identity children and adolescents face greater risk of other rights violations, including child marriage, trafficking and forced labour. Birth registration is also an important mean to prevent statelessness. It indicates where a person was born and who his/her parents are – key pieces of information which may be needed to establish which country’s nationality a child can acquire.

Churches can play a powerful role in implementing Sustainable Development Goal 16.9 (By 2030, provide legal identity for all, including birth registration) by:

- Recording important life events, especially baptisms. These records can be useful evidence in support of birth registration and nationality processes;
- Advocating with national and local authorities for the establishment of free and accessible birth registration

⁶ ACT forums represent a variety of shared platforms or spaces comprising of ACT voting members and observer members of the ACT Alliance. These members promote coordination and collaboration by encouraging the organization of forums that will enhance their humanitarian, development and advocacy work.

- procedures where they do not currently exist, and for the full and non-discriminatory implementation of existing procedures;
- Raising awareness in their communities about the importance of registering births and of the relevant procedures, using the pulpit, television, radio and other forms of communication;
 - Advocating for gender justice in legislation: both men and women should be able to transfer nationality to their children, as opposed to just men, as is the case in many countries;
 - Advocating for birth registration among refugees. Registering these births establishes a legal record of place of birth and a child's parents, the information upon which acquisition of nationality is based. Without valid birth registration, a country may question a child's nationality; thus children born as refugees could be denied the right to reside in their families' country of origin without official documentation validating their nationality claims.

Churches endorsing this Principle will pay special attention to children and adolescents at risk of statelessness. Their leadership will help to ensure that employees and volunteers of the church know about the role churches can play in promoting birth registration. For suggested capacity building materials, please refer to the "Resources and tools" section accompanying this document.

2 - Promote meaningful participation by children and adolescents

Decisions that are infused with the perspectives of children and adolescents will be more relevant, more effective and more sustainable. By giving children and adolescents the opportunity to help find solutions to problems that impact them, the decisions they inform will have greater impact and meaning. Child participation is also a way for children to learn and to grow into the societies they are a part of: through participation, children acquire skills, build competence, develop aspirations and gain confidence. Listening to children is about respecting them and teaching them the importance of respecting others. If children are given the chance to share their ideas in a group and to be taken seriously, then they learn that others, too, have a right to be heard. Listening is a way of resolving conflict, finding solutions and promoting understanding – all of which are beneficial for family life.

Churches endorsing the Principles recognize the importance of meaningful child participation, the right of the child to be heard and intergenerational dialogue as a priority that is deeply anchored in Christian values and theological analysis.

2 a) Promote meaningful child and adolescent participation in church activities and worship

Churches endorsing the Principles seek to engage children and adolescents and their families or caregivers pro-actively in church life. They commit to:

- Ensure that the needs of children and adolescents with disabilities are taken into account in all aspects of the church's life, including when planning and implementing activities;
- Include training on child rights as an integral part of curricula and formation/refresher courses of pastors, church leaders and church council members;
- Develop, use and promote worship resources with particular relevance for children and adolescents and their families or caregivers, in accordance with their own traditions. Making children of all ages and their families feel welcome, and ensuring that they understand the liturgy and that services address the realities and challenges of their lives is a priority in the preparation of worship;
- Encourage churches to listen to the views, ideas and concerns of children through innovative approaches (see the "Resources and tools" section accompanying this document for examples);
- Pay special attention to the needs and interests of children and adolescents and their families/caregivers in the development of church activities and decisions. Children and adolescents and their families/caregivers should be consulted in the design of all programmes impacting them;
- Support the participation of children speaking minority languages.

2 b) Advocate for the recognition of children and adolescents as actors of change in society at large

Recognising that children and adolescents who feel safe, valued and inspired by their churches will reach out to their peers and promote their participation, churches endorsing the Principle will:

- Promote awareness and understanding of the importance of children and adolescents as stakeholders within society, their right to be heard and of their ability to contribute to decisions affecting their lives;
- Help leverage the potential of children and adolescents as effective advocates in their communities and actors of change in society at large by planning and carrying out targeted outreach activities;
- Seize opportunities to advocate for meaningful participation of children and adolescents in decisions affecting their lives, including through alternative reports to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child and the UN Universal Periodic Review;
- Empower girls and boys by ensuring access to critical information, including their rights, online safety, responding to inappropriate and violent behaviour, influencing decision-making and planning for child friendly churches, and identifying opportunities to address issues of concern;
- Support children and adolescents in reaching out to decision-makers and the general public so that their views and ideas may be heard and taken into account.

3 - Raise church voices for intergenerational climate justice, supporting initiatives for and with children and adolescents

Children are more exposed than adults to the impacts of climate change. They are more likely to get injured or die during disasters, such as tropical storms and floods. Babies cannot regulate their body temperature and are more vulnerable during heat waves. Children shoulder the bulk of the disease burden that increases with climate change and pollution; these include diarrhea, respiratory diseases, malaria and dengue fever. The impact of climate change can interrupt children's education, a result of extreme weather, displacement, or the destruction of infrastructure. The reliance on children – especially girls – to contribute to household income/duties is greater due to the impacts of climate change.

Climate change is already taking a toll on children, but its consequences will be even greater in the lives of future generations, representing a threat to their very survival. Today the world determines what kind of earth future generations will inherit. The principle of intergenerational justice recognizes that the rights of future generations are as important as the rights of children today.

Churches can play a key role in addressing this challenge, and children themselves can be the source of excellent solutions on how to adapt to our changing climate. By promoting such ideas, churches can influence human behaviour and encourage greener options for transportation, heating and energy consumption. They can also influence decisions taken by local and national authorities with a view to developing alternative sources of energy with a low carbon footprint.

Churches endorsing the Principles recognize the connection between climate change and children and adolescents' rights, and the need for an urgent response. Toward this end, churches commit to:

3 a) Promote systems and behaviours that are eco-friendly and adaptive to the impacts of climate change within the church

- Support eco-theological efforts to promote behaviour change among members of the church community for low emission, climate resilient choices.(e.g. eco-friendly buildings, divestment from fossil fuels, recycling, eco-friendly means of transport);
- Underline the linkage between faith and people's responsibility to protect creation through curricula for church-run schools and Sunday schools, helping children understand that their responsibilities toward the environment is an integral part of their faith to God. Provide concrete information on how to protect our planet;

- Promote opportunities and training for children and adolescents to engage in advocacy and to initiate responses to climate adaptation;
- Assess the eco-friendliness of church buildings and make adjustments where necessary. Consider establishing a system of official acknowledgment/rewards for churches which take concrete steps to be eco-friendly;
- Help the community anticipate and cope with climate-related changes (e.g. changing rainfall patterns, rising temperatures, increasingly intense and frequent extreme weather events) and disasters (e.g. storms, floods, droughts, heatwaves), changing disease patterns (e.g. dengue fever, malaria, lyme disease), sea level rise, reduced agricultural yields, and more competition for water and energy;
- Consult children and adolescents in this process, and allow them to actively participate in related decision-making.

3 b) Advocate for systems and behaviours that are eco-friendly and adaptive to the impacts of climate change in society at large

- Urge local and national governments to undertake concrete actions that address climate change and to comply with international commitments (e.g. COP21);
- Speak out as a moral voice to promote moving towards a low emission, climate resilient global society. Promoting awareness on the importance of all Sustainable Development Goals related to climate change, especially 13.2 (Integrate climate change measures into national policies, strategies and planning) and 13.3 (Improve education, awareness-raising and human and institutional capacity on climate change mitigation, adaptation, impact reduction and early warning)⁷;
- Advocate for climate resilience within the broader community so that children's needs can be met despite the worsening impacts of climate change. In particular, schools, medical facilities, energy supply, food availability and transportation systems need to withstand anticipated changes resulting from climate change;
- Promote children to be at the centre of plans and programmes for adapting to climate change within public and interfaith dialogues.

⁷ Goal 3 (Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages), Goal 7 (Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all), Goal 11 (Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable), Goal 12 (Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns), Goal 13 (Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts), and Goal 15 (Protect, restore and promote sustainable use of terrestrial ecosystems, sustainably manage forests, combat desertification, and halt and reverse land degradation and halt biodiversity loss) also have a strong direct link with climate change.

RESOURCES AND TOOLS AVAILABLE FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PRINCIPLES FOR CHILD-FRIENDLY CHURCHES

Links to each tool can be found on www.oikoumene.org/child-rights

Principle 1: Promote child protection through church communities

1 a - Ensure a child-safe church environment

Resources developed by UNICEF

- [International Safeguards for Children in Sports](#)
- [Child Protection Protocols for Churches in Barbados](#)

Resources developed by partner organizations and governments

- [Child Safeguarding Policy and Child Safeguarding Guidance](#), ACT Alliance
- [Developing and Implementing an Internal Child Protection Policy](#), BICE (Bureau International Catholique de l'Enfance)
- [Framework and Standards](#), Safe Church Training Agreement developed by the National Council of Churches Australia
- [Child Safeguarding Standards and How to Implement Them](#), Keeping Children Safe
- [The 10 Steps to a Child Safe Organization](#), Save the Children Australia, Child Wise, and World Vision
- [Child Safe Organisation - Toolkit](#), ECPAT
- [Child Safe Organisations - Self Study Manual](#), ECPAT
- [Creating Safe Environments for Children- A toolkit for safeguarding children and protecting them from harm](#), VIVA Network
- [Quality Improvement System Child Protection](#), VIVA Network
- [Safeguarding Children and Young People](#), UK Government

Principle 1: Promote child protection through church communities

1 b - Contribute to ending violence against children in society at large

Resources developed by churches

- [16 Days of Activism Campaign Overview](#)
- [Thursdays in Black](#)
- [Overview on UN Human Rights Mechanisms which can be used by Churches](#), WCC

Resources developed by UNICEF

- [Ending Violence Against Children - six strategies for action](#)
- [From Commitment to Action- what religious communities can do to eliminate violence against children](#), Religions for Peace, UNICEF
- [Hidden In Plain Sight: a statistical analysis of violence against children - Executive Summary](#)
- [Child Disciplinary Practices at Home](#)

Resources developed by partner organizations

- [Ending Corporal Punishment of Children – a handbook for worship and gathering](#), Global Initiative to End Corporal Punishment of Children, Churches' Network for Non-violence
- [Ending Corporal Punishment of Children- a handbook for working with and within religious communities](#), Save the Children, Global Initiative to End Corporal Punishment of Children, Churches' Network for Non-violence
- [Inter-faith Initiative to End Violence Against Children in Swaziland](#), World Day of Prayer and Action for Children

- [Channels of Hope - impact case study](#), World Vision
- [Learning from the Implementation of Channels of Hope for Child Protection in Malawi](#), World Vision UK
- [Channels of Hope for Child Protection](#), World Vision
- [Child-friendly Version CRC General Comment Freedom from Violence](#), World Vision
- WWSF campaign [19 days of activism](#)

Resources developed by the Office of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on violence against children

- [Toward a world free from violence against children: Global survey](#)
- [Safe and child-sensitive counselling, complaint and reporting mechanisms to address violence against children](#)
- [Protecting children from harmful practices in plural legal systems](#)
- [Releasing Children's Potential and Minimizing Risks - ICTs, the Internet and Violence against Children](#)
- [Tackling Violence in Schools: Bridging the Gap between Standards and Practice](#)

Principle 1: Promote child protection through church communities

1 c - Support child protection in emergencies

First point of contact for churches to coordinate emergency preparedness and responses (also for churches which are not members of ACT)

- ACT Alliance country forums: <http://actalliance.org/about/forums/>
- If no country forum exists please contact the ACT Alliance regional focal points: <http://actalliance.org/about/secretariat/>

Resource developed by churches

- [Petite Guide Solidaire](#) (French), AGORA

Resources developed by UNICEF

- [The Crossroads of Child Protection and Education in Peacebuilding](#)
- [Growing Up in Conflict](#)
- [Symposium Growing Up In Conflict: The impact on children's mental health and psychosocial well-being](#)
- Chapter 3 (in particular the section on Community Leaders) of [Children and Truth Commissions](#)

Basic guidance documents of the Child Protection Working Group (CPWG)

CPWG is the global level forum for coordination and collaboration on child protection in humanitarian settings. The group brings together NGOs, UN agencies, academics and other partners under the shared objective of ensuring more predictable, accountable and effective child protection responses in emergencies. <http://cpwg.net/cpwg/>

- Minimum Standards for Child Protection in Humanitarian Action, Child Protection Working Group.
More information and material [here](#)
- [UN Secretary General, 9 Oct. 2003, Special Measures for Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse](#)
(in particular Section 6 on the treatment of beneficiary communities by anyone working in a humanitarian setting)

Resources developed by partner organizations

- [Webinar on Child Safeguarding in Humanitarian Settings](#) , Child Safe Horizons

Principle 1: Promote child protection through church communities

1 d - Advocate for children's and adolescent's rights through birth registration

Resources developed by UNICEF and UNHCR

- [I am here, I belong](#), UNHCR
- [A Passport to Protection - A guide to birth registration programming](#), UNICEF
- [Every Child's Birth Right - Inequities and trends in birth registration](#), UNICEF
- [Toward Universal Birth Registration - A systematic approach to the application of ICT](#), UNICEF/IADB_

Resources developed by partner organizations

- [ABC for Action and Advocacy - A note on universal birth registration](#), World Day of Prayer and Action for Children
- [Birth Registration in Emergencies](#), Plan International

Principle 2: Promote meaningful child participation

2 a – Promote meaningful participation by children and adolescents in church activities and worship

2 b – Advocate for the recognition of children and adolescents as actors of change in society at large

Resources developed by churches

- [Child Friendly Church Award by the Diocese of Liverpool](#)

Resources developed by UNICEF

- [Every Child's Right to Be Heard](#), UNICEF and Save the Children
- [Child Friendly Schools Manual](#)
- [Climate Change: take action now!](#) (guidance on child participation, regardless of the issue it is applied to)

Resources developed by partner organizations

- [Learning to Live Together Manual](#), Arigatou International
- [Good Practices Series: massa-massar, the journey](#), Arigatou International
- [Child Friendly Churches](#), VIVA Network
- [Child Friendly Churches Aims](#), VIVA Network
- [Developing Child Friendly Churches Resource Pack](#), VIVA Network
- [Doorsteps](#), VIVA Network
- [VIVA Programme Portfolio](#), VIVA Network
- [The Children's Good Treatment Campaign](#), VIVA Network
- [Child Participation Reference Guide](#), World Vision
- [Self-Assessment Tool - Guidelines on child participation](#), World Vision
- [Child Participation in the UPR Mechanism Video](#), World Vision
- [Bible studies : Children of promise](#), World Vision

Resources developed by the Office of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on violence against children

- [Raising Understanding among Children and Young People on the optional protocol to the convention on the rights of the child on a communications procedure](#)

- [Raising Understanding among Children and Young People on the optional protocol to the convention on the rights of the child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography](#)
- [Why Children's Protection from Violence should be at the Heart of the Post-2015 Development Agenda - A Review of Consultations on the Post-2015 Development Agenda](#)

Principle 3: Raise Churches' voice for intergenerational justice, supporting initiatives for and with children and adolescents

- 3 a) Promote systems and behaviours that are eco-friendly and adaptive to the impacts of climate change within the church**
- 3 b) Advocate for systems and behaviours that are eco-friendly and adaptive to the impacts of climate change in society at large**

Resources developed by churches

- [Climate Change - The policy of the national investing bodies of the Church of England](#)

Resources developed by LWF

- [LWF Journey to Climate Justice](#)
- [Board Game](#)
- [Make a Difference](#)

Resources developed by UNICEF

- [UNICEF Messages on Climate Change and Children](#)
- [Why Sustainable Energy Matters to Children](#)
- [Climate Change - Children's challenge](#)
- [How to Defend Child Rights Affected by Climate Change](#)
- Video: [Voices from the Climate Frontlines](#)
- [Video](#) from COP20, UNICEF Zambia
- [Climate Change - Take action now!](#)

Resources developed by partner organizations

- [Act to adapt](#), Red Cross/Red Crescent Climate Center
- [Community-based Adaptation to Climate Change](#), International Institute for Environment and Development
- [UNFCCC Youth Portal](#), United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC)
- [National Communications](#), submitted by State Parties to the UNFCCC
- [Climate Change Knowledge Portal](#), World Bank

Footprint calculators for children

- <http://www.parkcitygreen.org/Calculators/Kids-Calculator.aspx>
- <http://www.myclimate.org/education/>
- http://wwf.panda.org/how_you_can_help/live_green/footprint_calculator/
- <http://calc.zerofootprint.net/>
- <http://tfl.kopymark.com/index.php>

Other tools promoting awareness about children's rights

Resources developed by WCC

- [Overview on UN Human Rights Mechanisms that can be used by Churches](#)

Resources developed by UNICEF

- [Stand Up for Children's Rights](#)
- [Child Friendly Schools Manual](#)

Resources developed by partner organisations

- [Guide for Alternative Reports to the CRC](#) (including child-friendly version), Child Rights Connect
- [Child-friendly Version CRC General Comment Right to Health](#), World Vision
- [Biblical Reflections on Child Rights](#), World Vision
- [Protecting Children, a biblical perspective on child rights](#), World Vision

ANNEXES TO THE PRINCIPLES

Annex 1: WCC's history related to children

Responding to urgent requests from some member churches, the WCC has organized three children's consultations in the past:

- 1. 1996: In Geneva, Switzerland,** with children from five continents and partner organizations. The focus was to listen to street children and develop responses by churches to support them. The group explored ways in which children can continue to work with the WCC around mutual objectives on behalf of the world's children through the creation of a global child-to-child network directly related to the WCC. The report "[We can help each other](#)" was submitted to the Central Committee in September 1996. It outlined the points of discussion and the forms of action children, churches, the WCC and international organizations can take on behalf of the world's children. This report led to a [Resolution on Children adopted by Central Committee, September 1996](#), affirming the direction of its Unit "Sharing and Service" on children's rights. At the invitation of the WCC, children participated in a number of international meetings that year, including the Central Committee meeting in September 1996. The Central Committee adopted a [statement on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) in September 1997.
- 2. In 1997, in Brazil,** to discuss the formation of an international children's network and provide training sessions on advocacy and leadership. The children in this consultation were empowered to be effective members of the future International Children's Network. Back in their home countries they were supported to organize several events to share their experience with other children and build up their national networks.
- 3. 1998: In Harare, Zimbabwe,** during the 8th Assembly of the WCC: Children and organizations that had attended the two previous conferences were invited to bring their experiences to the 8th Assembly. A special event was organized under the overall title, "The Dignity of Children," which included children from different parts of the world, among them street children from Harare and various villages in Zimbabwe. Participants prepared a [joint message](#) for the Programme Guidelines Committee, requesting their support and leadership, and challenging the WCC and all its member churches to promote the participation of children, recognize the UN CRC and support the development of an "International Global Ecumenical Children's Network."

Further details can be found at: <http://www.wcc-coe.org/wcc/what/regional/children-e.html>.

The proposal to develop an ecumenical children's network has not been implemented at that time due to conflicting priorities and lack of resources.

Annex 2: WCC 10th General Assembly outcome document “Putting Children at the Center”

WCC 10th General Assembly - Busan, November 2013

Inspired by the Korean children’s songs, music and beautiful drawings on peace, we have reaffirmed our commitment for the rights and dignity of all children.

We affirm that their dignity comes from their creation in God’s own image. They are precious human beings with rights that need to be guaranteed and protected by our families, our societies and our churches. When Jesus called a child and put that child in the center (Mathews 18:1-5), he not only demonstrated extraordinary respect for children but he upheld their inherent human dignity and challenged his disciples to learn from them.

The increasing deterioration of the environment surrounding our children must be taken seriously. Although many efforts have been made by Intergovernmental organizations, interfaith networks, governments, NGOs and churches, millions of children are still suffering from poverty, displacement and the effects of migration, child labour, sexual abuse and prostitution, discrimination, child to child violence and the everyday violence of corporal punishment.

Children living in developed societies suffer from loneliness; in many cases they are denied their very right to a childhood by being forced to enter a very competitive style of life from an early age. Too many children are dying in civil wars and conflicts. Their cries and suffering challenge our faith and consciences.

We are grateful for those churches all over the world that have been offering shelter to children, to those who are healing their wounds and empowering them through participation and citizenship. We acknowledge with sadness that some other churches have not been advocates for children’s rights, nor have they stood in solidarity with marginalized and indigenous children. We are concerned that our churches have not always provided a safe environment, or have remained silent about child abuse.

We see as a sign of hope that empowered girls and boys are raising their voices and bringing about positive changes as active citizens of today and tomorrow. They increasingly exercise their right to participation, especially in decisions that affect their lives.

In the accomplishment of God’s mission, our churches, ecumenical bodies, interfaith network, NGOs and intergovernmental organizations have to respond to the ethical, moral and spiritual imperative to uphold children’s dignity and do more by:

- *Respecting, valuing and protecting all children regardless of race, religion, or gender, creating a healthy, peaceful and inclusive environment – free from discrimination, exploitation, violence and abuse.*
- *Putting children at the center, listening to their voices and providing opportunities for participation as subjects in the life of the church and community.*
- *Engaging in concrete actions of healing and solidarity with children.*
- *Offering refuge and shelter to children, focusing on those who are most at risk and discriminated against.*
- *Nurturing children’s spirituality and joining with others in prayer and action for and with them.*
- *Advocating for their rights with governments and other bodies that influence policy change.*
- *Holding hands with children and creating new forms of partnership with them based in full recognition of their capacities, rights and responsibilities.*
- *Offering spaces for reflection and sharing of good practices.*
- *Encouraging positive parenting so that children may grow in an atmosphere of respect, love and compassion.*
- *Working with others in the global movement to prohibit and eliminate corporal punishment of children.*

- *Using the scriptures to promote peace, justice and non-violence in living with children.*
- *Building partnerships with intergovernmental organizations, ecumenical partners and other faith communities and networks as well as alliances for promoting children's rights.*

Busan, South Korea. 8 of November 2013

This message was signed by the following organisations:

- *Christian Conference of Asia*
- *Pacific Conference of Churches*
- *Latin American Council of Churches*
- *All Africa Conference of Churches*
- *Churches' Network for Non-violence*
- *Conference of European Churches*
- *Global Network of Religions for Children*
- *Ecumenical Center for Women's Studies in Cuba*
- *Young Men's Christian Association (YMCA)*
- *Methodist Church in Britain*
- *Toraja Church (PP SMGT)*
- *OROSA- Orissa Forum for Social Action – India*
- *Consejo Unido de Educacion Cristiana – Argentina*
- *Iglesia Presbiteriana de Colombia*
- *Parable Cambodia*
- *Moravian Church – Nicaragua*
- *Christian Council of Churches – Puerto Rico*
- *Argentinian Federation of Evangelical Churches*
- *Parable Cambodia Ministries*

Annex 3: Participants in the consultative drafting process

Special thanks go to the following people who collaborated in the participatory drafting process of the Principles:

Core Group members

1. Mr. Masimba Lovemore Kuchera, Moderator of the Commission of Churches on International Affairs (CCIA)⁸ Working Group 2

Currently the Director of the Centre for Disability and Development in Zimbabwe, Mr Kuchera, a native of Zimbabwe, serves on the boards of the Zimbabwe Coalition on Debt and Development (ZIMCODD) and the Rotary club of Highlands and is a member of the Ecumenical Disability Advocates Network (EDAN). His main interests are in disability advocacy, peace and conflict resolution, and community development. Mr Kuchera previously worked as Program Officer for Policy Research and Analysis at the Student Solidarity Trust, and was National Coordinator of the Students Christian Movement of Zimbabwe from August 2003-February 2004. Mr Kuchera served on the previous CCIA from 2006 to 2014, and is a member of the United Church of Christ in Zimbabwe.

2. Ms. Liza Barrie, Chief, Civil Society Partnerships, UNICEF

Liza Barrie has been Chief of Civil Society Partnerships at UNICEF Headquarters in New York since January 2008. In this role, she leads a focused global effort to strengthen the organization's strategic engagement with civil society. This includes employing UNICEF's proven ability to mobilize, convene and coordinate broad coalitions within civil society to respond to complex challenges facing children; imparting effective strategies to country offices on partnering with civil society organisations; and sharpening the evidence and knowledge base of UNICEF engagement with civil society.

3. Metropolitan Elpidophoros of Bursa

The Metropolitan of Bursa and Exarch of Bithynia is a member of the Patriarchal delegations to the General Assemblies of the Conference of European Churches and the WCC. He served as Secretary of the Pan-Orthodox Synods in Sofia (1998), Istanbul (2005), Geneva (2006), and Istanbul (2008). A native of Turkey, he was elected to his current position in 2011, when he was appointed Abbot of the Holy Patriarchal and Stavropegial Monastery of the Holy Trinity on the island of Chalki. A member of the Faith and Order Commission of the WCC since 1996, Metropolitan Elpidophoros of Bursa previously served as Deputy Secretary of the Holy and Sacred Synod, and studied theology at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki, the University of Bonn, and St. John the Damascene in Lebanon.

4. Mr. Joseph Cornelius Donnelly

Permanent Delegate to the United Nations, Caritas Internationalis. North American with extensive international humanitarian and emergency experiences in Central/Latin America, Africa and Middle East. Strong advocacy engagement with UN agencies and other global organizations. Promoting substantive partnerships rooted in local communities, with deliberate ecumenical and inter-religious accompaniment to promote peacebuilding, reconciliation, human rights, dignity and justice for all peoples. Chairman of the NGO Working Group on Security Council. Active member of the EcoSoc Multi-Stakeholder Advisory Group from MDGs to SDGs and 2030 Agenda.

5. Rev. Dr Micheline Kamba Kasongo

A minister with the Church of Christ in Congo and the Presbyterian Community of Kinshasa, Rev. Dr. Micheline Kamba Kasongo also serves as a lecturer in her native Democratic Republic of Congo. A member of the WCC Central Committee since 2006, she specializes in women's and disability issues.

⁸ <http://www.oikoumene.org/en/what-we-do/ccia>

6. Mr. Vakhtang V. Kipshidze

Currently serving as Head of Information and Analytics Directorate within the Informational Department of the Moscow Patriarchate, Mr Kipshidze is responsible for coordinating Inter-religious summits in connection with the G8. Affiliated with the Russian Orthodox Church and representing the Moscow Patriarchate, he specializes in dialogue with international organizations and interfaith communication. In this capacity, Mr Kipshidze, a Russian national, has taken part in numerous events coordinated by the United Nations, OSCE and the Council of Europe. A graduate of the Law Faculty of the Moscow State Institute for International Relations, Mr Kipshidze has served as executive secretary of the group of experts which drafted the Russian Orthodox Church's Basic Teaching on Human Dignity, Freedom and Rights, which was later adopted by the Bishops' Council of the Russian Orthodox Church.

7. Rev. Jennie Nordin

As Policy Advisor on International Development for the Church of Sweden, Rev. Jennie Nordin focuses on Faith and Learning, which includes theology and education, leadership and organization, exchange between faith communities as well as the role of religion, churches and others in development and freedom of religion. As a child and teen she actively participated in programs for children and youth at the parish, diocese, national and international level. A Swedish national, Rev. Nordin's particular experience is in preventing and responding to sexual exploitation and abuse of children, serving both the church and international children's rights organizations.

8. Bishop Dr. Chibuzo Raphael Opoko

A Bishop of the Methodist Church of Nigeria, Bishop Dr Chibuzo Raphael Opoko holds among other degrees, a Master of Science in Disability Studies from the London Institute of Child Health (ICH) and a joint Diploma in Theology and Religious Studies from the University of Calabar, in his native Nigeria. His activities related to CCIA have included engaging with government officials to ensure the adequate provision of resources to rehabilitate and reintegrate persons affected with leprosy and to educate their children. Bishop Opoko also advocates for the rights of people affected by leprosy, calling for the abolition of segregation policies in schools and hospital systems. His efforts have led to positive change regarding the public's acceptance of leprosy sufferers. In terms of his contribution to CCIA, Bishop Opoko is engaged with the promotion of human rights, religious liberty, gender equality, the rights of refugees, migrants and internally displaced people, and issues of peace and justice. He also focuses on social, political and economic justice.

9. Ms. Ekaterina Gizela Papadhopuli

Currently serving as Spiritual Nurture of Children Director for World Vision International. Provides policies, strategies and technical guidance. Spiritual Nurture of Children is an integral part of children's development, affected in particular by relationships, care, protection and the environment in which children live. Mrs. Papadhopuli holds a master degree of "Development Management", from The Open University, Milton Keynes.

10. Ms. Melisande Schifter

A member of the Evangelical Church in Germany, Ms Melisande Schifter is currently a PhD student in ethics researching Chinese Christian entrepreneurship and the influence of Christian faith on business behaviour. She holds a Master of Theology from the University of Geneva, Switzerland, and offers expertise in social entrepreneurship, sustainability, business ethics, and humanitarian work. Formerly an intern serving both the WCC and Globethics.net, Ms Schifter is a resident of Switzerland, and holds dual German and Thai citizenship.

11. Ms. Frederique Seidel

Serving as Special Advisor on Child Rights for the WCC, Frederique Seidel specializes in peacebuilding through child rights implementation. A French and German national, Ms Seidel holds a Master's degree of Sociology and Educational Science from the Sorbonne and Institut d'Etudes Politiques in Paris, and Freie Universität in Berlin. Ms Seidel worked for UNICEF for 13 years, serving as Head of Sub-Office in Kosovo, Child Rights Education

Programme Manager, and UNICEF Deputy Representative in Algeria. She also served as spokesperson for the UN and the OSCE in post-war Balkans (1996- 2001) and was a journalist for Deutsche Welle TV in Berlin. Her research includes strategies of support to children affected by violence.

12. Mr. Paul Stephenson

Paul Stephenson leads the Child Development and Rights technical team for World Vision International, which provides strategic and technical guidance for the global World Vision partnership on Child Development, Child Protection, Child Participation, Child Rights, Gender, Inclusion and Spiritual Development.

13. Ms. Caterina Tino

Caterina Tino works as Partnerships Specialist for UNICEF Civil Society Partnerships in New York since 2011. In this capacity, she works to strengthen, expand and monitor UNICEF work with religious communities to promote and protect children's rights. In particular, she manages UNICEF global partnerships with Scholas, the World Council of Churches and Religions for Peace. Prior to her appointment with UNICEF, Ms. Tino served as Civil Affairs Officer in the United Nations Peacekeeping Mission in Kosovo, as Researcher at the Mediation Support Unit of the UN Department of Political Affairs, as Adviser on Disarmament and International Security at the Spanish Mission to the UN during Spain's EU Presidency, and as the UN Representative of the International Action Network on Small Arms.

14. Ms. Agneta Ucko

Agneta Ucko is Vice Chair of the Interfaith Council on Ethics Education for Children of Arigatou International, an international faith-based NGO committed to building a better world for children and securing child rights through partnership-based initiatives and interfaith cooperation. Having pursued her Master of Theology at the University of Lund, Sweden, Ms Ucko was the Deputy General Secretary of the Lutheran World Federation before she held the position of Director at Arigatou International in Geneva from 2003 – 2013, where she was responsible for developing the ethics education programme, Learning to Live Together. She served as President of the NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child from 2005 – 2007.

15. Bishop Ketut Waspada

A Moderator of the Protestant Christian Church in Bali (GKPB), Bishop Ketut Waspada's relationship with the WCC dates back to 1975, when he served as steward at the WCC 5th Assembly, in Nairobi. A native of Indonesia, Bishop Waspada also served on the executive board of the National Council of Churches in Indonesia for ten years, and was Chair of the Association of Christian Institutes for Social Concern in Asia, or ACISCA. A graduate of Duta Wacan Theological Seminary, Yogyakarta, he also holds a Doctor of Theology degree from Ludwig Maximilian Universität in Munich. Bishop Waspada specializes in areas of social ministry, mission, and theology, with attention to spiritual formation, environmental concerns, the development of micro-enterprises and leadership training.

16. Dr. Emily Welty

A member of the Presbyterian Church (USA), Dr Emily Welty is Assistant Professor and Director of Peace and Justice Studies at Pace University, New York City. She has been a member of CCIA since 2006, serving on the Inter-religious Dialogue Cooperation Working Group and as co-moderator of the WCC Working Group on the Millennium Development Goals. Since 2013, she has been a WCC Ecumenical Peacebuilder. A U.S. national, Dr Welty trained in peace and justice studies, and specializes in regions throughout Africa and the Middle East, focusing on humanitarian aid and the religious dimensions of peacebuilding. She has had experience working in cross-cultural and unstable contexts, including Israel/Palestine, Myanmar/Burma, Sri Lanka, Northern Ireland, Cuba, Nicaragua, Haiti, South Africa, Uganda, Kenya and Sudan. Dr Welty has also served as the International Peace Research Association representative to the United Nations for the UN Economic and Social Council.

Theological Working Group members

1. Rev. Dr. Niclas Blåder

Rev. Dr. Niclas Blåder is a researcher at the Church of Sweden Research unit. He has written about Children and Church didactics and about ecclesiology and identity.

2. Ms. Marcia J. Bunge

A Professor of Religion and the Bernhardson Distinguished Chair of Lutheran Studies at Gustavus Adolphus College (Saint Peter, Minnesota). Her current area of research is religious understandings of children and childhood, and she has edited and co-edited four volumes on the subject: *The Child in Christian Thought* (Eerdmans, 2001); *The Child in the Bible* (Eerdmans, 2008); *Children and Childhood in World Religions: Primary Sources and Texts* (Rutgers, 2009); and *Children, Adults, and Shared Responsibilities: Jewish, Christian, and Muslim Perspectives* (Cambridge, 2012).

3. Bishop Duleep De Chickera

A member of CCIA since 2006, Bishop Duleep de Chikera served as moderator of the CCIA working group on interreligious cooperation from 2006 to 2013. The Bishop of the Church of Ceylon, a native of Sri Lanka, is also a member of the WCC Reference Group for follow-up from the International Ecumenical Peace Convocation, and the WCC Economy of Life and Diakonia processes. His areas of expertise concerning CCIA include the exploration of theological and Biblical resources on inter-religious collaboration for social integration, social justice, reconciliation and peace, and Asian spirituality.

4. Rev. Maren von der Heyde

Rev. Maren von der Heyde is the Managing Director of the Educational and Diaconal Ministry of the Church District Hamburg- West/Südholstein. The Diaconal Ministries offer counselling services and therapy to families, parents and children and young persons who need help, including services for refugees, the homeless, and people with drug and alcohol problems. She is member of a group responsible for establishing and implementing safeguarding policies for children and all vulnerable persons. Prior to this position, Rev. Maren von der Heyde served as the Asia Secretary at the Association of Missions and Churches in Germany.

5. Ms. Jennifer Haddad Mosher

Jennifer Haddad Mosher is an educator and independent researcher in American Orthodox religious education and the challenges of Orthodox spiritual formation in the modern North American context. She has a BA in Church History from Yale University, a MAR in Scripture from Yale Divinity School, and a ThM in Systematic Theology & Ethics from St. Vladimir's Orthodox Theological Seminary, where her thesis explored patristic teaching on the nature and significance of Jesus' childhood. She is currently working on a doctorate in Religion & Education at Union Theological Seminary in NYC, writing her dissertation on the life and work of Orthodox educator Sophie Koulomzin. With Dr. Sarah Tauber of Jewish Theological Seminary, she is co-chair of the Religious Persecution, Vicarious Trauma Work Group of the international Religious Education Association. She is a member of the Orthodox Church in America.

6. Dr. Isabel Apawo Phiri

An African theologian, renowned academic and ecumenist who has served as the WCC's Associate General Secretary for Public Witness and Diakonia since 2012, is a native of Malawi. Dr Phiri was director of the Centre for Constructive Theology at the University of KwaZulu Natal, Pietermaritzburg, South Africa before being appointed editor of the *Journal of Gender and Religion in Africa*. She has published many articles and books, including the latest co-edited with Dietrich Werner, *Handbook of Theological Education in Africa*. Oxford: Regnum Books International. Dr Phiri has been engaged with the ecumenical movement for two decades, serving as commissioner for WCC's Programme on Theological Education and as general coordinator of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians.

7. Rev. Christopher Rajkumar

Rev. Christopher Rajkumar serves the National Council of Churches in India as an Executive Secretary for the Commission on Justice, Peace and Creation. He is one of the members of the Child Theology movement in India. Rev. Rajkumar campaigns for 'Green Sunday Schools' and he is part of a team of experts developing curricula for Sunday Schools and Primary Schools on issues such as climate change and mutual understanding among people of different faiths.

8. Rev. Dr. Maria Klasson Sundin

An adviser at the Church of Sweden national office, she has written about children and freedom of religion in the context of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child.

9. Rev. Prof. Dr. Dr. h.c. Dietrich Werner

Senior Advisor for Theology, Ecumenical Education and Research in Bread for the World/Protestant Development Service in Berlin, Germany.

10. Dr. Keith J. White

Dr Keith J. White is Chair of the Child Theology Movement, Director of Mill Grove, and Associate Lecturer at Spurgeons College.

Consultations with children and adolescents

Consultations with children and adolescents for input and feedback to the Principles took place in the following countries:

- **Kancheepuram, South India:** 1 consultation with a total of 20 children aged 10-18 was organised and conducted by Rev. James Cecil Victor, Director, Pastoral Concerns Department at Church of South India Christ Church on 25 April.
- **Liverpool, UK:** 3 consultations with a total of 34 children between 5 and 16 years of age were organized and conducted by Sue Mitchell, Children & Families Missioner for the Diocese of Liverpool between 30 March and 24 April 2016.
- **Pietermaritzburg, South Africa:** 3 consultations with a total of 38 children between 15 and 17 years of age were organized and conducted by Jelissa Hammond, Assistant confirmation facilitator at St Lukes Church, Woodlands between 10 and 24 April 2016.
- **Sikumana Village Kupang, Indonesia:** 2 consultations with a total of 26 children between 3 and 18 years of age were organized and conducted by Aryanti Malo, S.Pd, Sunday school teacher at Sion Oepura Church on 17 and 18 April 2016.
- **Tirana, Albania:** 1 consultation with a total of 4 children between 10 and 16 years of age was organized and conducted by Ekaterina Papadhopuli and Arvenola Bekteshi SNC director and CC Manager at World Vision on 7 May 2016.
- **Abuja, Nigeria:** 1 consultation with a total of 22 children between 6 and 15 years of age was organized and conducted by Barr. (Mrs.) Chinelo Ngozi Anazodo, Coordinator for Women and Children at the Office of the Primate at Church of Nigeria on 1 May 2016.

Input was also provided by Helena Hahr Kamienski, Theological adviser at Church of Sweden Youth, national office in **Sweden**, where further consultations will take place in 2016.

Advisors

1. **Dr. Agnes Abum,** Anglican Church of Kenya, WCC Moderator of the Central Committee
2. **Barr. (Mrs.) Chinelo Ngozi Anazodo,** Office of the Primate - Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) and All African Conference of Churches, Coordinator, Women and Children
3. **Ms. Caroline Bader-Richter,** LWF, Youth Secretary
4. **Rev. Dr. Niclas Blåder,** Church of Sweden, Research Department, Secretary for Theology and Ecumenism
5. **Ms. Cristina Colon,** UNICEF, Policy Specialist, Climate Change and Environment

6. **Ms. France Charlet**, ECPAT, Head of Advocacy and Communication
7. **Mr. Chris Dodd**, Churches' Network for Non-violence, Coordinator
8. **Mr. Alex Heikens**, UNICEF, Senior Policy Specialist, Climate Change and Environment
9. **Ms. Sarah Kambarami**, ACT Alliance, Head of Programmes
10. **Ms. Theresa Kilbane**, UNICEF, Sr. Adviser, Social Norms and Protection of Children from Violence
11. **Ms. Christine Klauth**, UNICEF, Policy Officer, Climate and Environment
12. **Mr. Gert Kuiper**, ICCO/Kerk in Actie, Regional Coordinator Latin America & Southern Africa, International Program Department
13. **Ms. Nadya Kassam**, UNICEF, Child Protection Specialist, Birth Registration
14. **Rev. Milton Mejia**, Latin American Council of Churches, Coordinator
15. **Ms. Sue Mitchell**, Diocese of Liverpool, UK, Specialist on Child-friendly Churches Award Scheme
16. **Rev. Lydia Mwaniki**, All African Conference of Churches, Director, Theology, Family Life
17. **Mr. Kerry Neal**, UNICEF, Child Protection Specialist, Justice for Children
18. **Ms. Marta Palma**, Global Network of Religions for Children Europe, former Coordinator
19. **Ms. Karen Rasmussen**, Child Safe Horizons, Director
20. **Ms. Kristiina Rintakoski**, Finnish Evangelical Lutheran Mission Peacebuilding and Advocacy, Director
21. **Ms. Saudamini Siegrist**, UNICEF, Senior Advisor for Child Protection in Emergencies
22. **Ms. Sally Smith**, UNAIDS, Partnership Adviser
23. **Ms. Katri Suomi**, Finnish Church Aid, International Programme
24. **Rev. Dr. Olivia B. Updegrove**, Family and Children's Ministry Team, Disciples of Christ, USA
25. **Rev. Lorenzo Vargas**, World Association of Christian Communication, Canada
26. **Ms. Mollie Vickery**, United Methodist Women, Executive Secretary for Children, Youth & Family
27. **Mr. John Walden**, VIVA Network, Network Development Consultant
28. **Ms. Karin Wibor**, Swedish Christian Council, General Secretary

Contributions to the Principles in the WCC-UNICEF seminar on 19/20 November 2015

1. **Dr. Stefanos Athanasiou**, Christkatholische Kirche der Schweiz, Assistant Chief Catechist
2. **Dr. Abba Ayenew**, Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church, WCC Executive Committee Member
3. **Bishop Samuel Robert Azariah**, Church of Pakistan, WCC Executive Committee Member
4. **Rev. Dr. Hyun Ju Bae**, Presbyterian Church of Korea, WCC Executive Committee Member
5. **Dr. Ulysses Burley III**, Evangelical Lutheran Church USA, WCC Executive Committee Member
6. **Ms. Caroline Collins**, Church of England, Diocese of Liverpool, Children and Families Worker
7. **Prof. Dr. Oscar Enrique Corvalán-Vásquez**, Iglesia Pentecostal de Chile, Education Specialist
8. **Mr. Peter Ekman**, Church of Sweden, Officer for Children and Youth
9. **H.E. Metropolitan Prof. Dr. Gennadios of Sassima**, Ecumenical Patriarchate, WCC Vice-Moderator, Central Committee
10. **Archpriest Mikhail Goundiaev**, Russian Orthodox Church, WCC Executive Committee Member
11. **Mr. Kimhoun Ham**, Parable Cambodia, Director
12. **Rev. Dr. Henriette Hutabarat-Lebang**, Gereja Toraja, WCC Executive Committee Member
13. **Rev. Welmintje Kameli Maleng**, Gereja Masehi Injili di Timor (GMIT)
14. **Deaconess Mable Kifwabantu**, United Church Zambia, Community Development/Social Justice
15. **Ms. Kerstin Kollander**, Church of Sweden, Senior Advisor Global Relations, Team Coordinator
16. **Dr. Manoj Kurian**, WCC, Ecumenical Advocacy Alliance
17. **Ms. Anne Laakko**, United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Legal Officer (Statelessness)
18. **Ms. Heather MacLeod**, World Vision International Humanitarian Operations
19. **Ms. Nicolette Moodie**, UNICEF, Human Rights and Gender Liaison Officer
20. **Ms. Elda Moreno**, Office of the Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General on Violence against Children, Director
21. **Ms. Ilaria Paolazzi**, Child Rights Connect, Child Rights Officer

22. **Ms. Jennifer Philpot-Nissen**, World Vision International, Senior Advisor, Human Rights
23. **Mr. Peter Prove**, WCC, CCIA Director
24. **Dr. Susan Purcell Gilpin**, WCC, Health and Healing Programme
25. **Dr. Audeh B. Quawas**, Greek Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem, WCC Executive Committee Member
26. **Rev. Dr. Peniel Rajkumar**, WCC, Programme Executive, Inter-religious Dialogue and Cooperation
27. **Ms. Sabine Rakotomalala**, Technical Adviser, Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children
28. **Rev. Margaret Rollins Rose**, The Episcopal Church USA, Deputy to the Presiding Bishop
29. **Ms. Birgit Sandler-Koschel**, Protestant Church Germany (EKD), Head of Education Department
30. **Ms. Joyce Steiner**, Christian Council of Ghana, Senior Programme Manager, Human Rights
31. **Mr. Dinesh Suna**, WCC, Ecumenical Water Network
32. **Bishop Mary Ann Swenson**, United Methodist Church USA, WCC Vice-Moderator, Central Committee
33. **Ms. Juliette Torabian**, UNESCO, Programme Specialist
34. **Rev. James Cecil Victor**, Church of South India, Director, Department of Pastoral Concerns
35. **Ms. Jane Wambui**, Presbyterian Church of East Africa, Kenya, Sunday School Coordinator

Annex 4: Quotes from consultations with children

“If the Principles become a reality then children will know someone cares for them.” (UK)

“The church brings hope and understanding. It creates bridge between countries.” (Albania)

“The church could work harder at being a place of safety.” (UK)

“All churches should have the rights of children displayed on their noticeboards, so all adults can see what their rights are.” (UK)

“We were shocked to learn that babies don’t all get birth certificates and that this precludes them from medicine and schooling.” (South Africa)

“Churches should do more for children with disabilities.” (South Africa)

“We should always be included in churches’ decisions about the environment: we understand this far better than adults.” (South Africa)

“The church should form child-centred committees, where the children will have their say in planning activities for the church.” (Indonesia)

“About 55% of the consulted children expressed excitement at the idea that the church can be more child-friendly. About 50% said they will want the Priests to inculcate some of the Principles for Child-friendly Churches. About 30% of the children said that their Sunday-school teachers should change their attitude towards children.” (Nigeria)

“The church makes me happy, if affects me positively, it makes me a better person that loves others.” (Albania)

“For too long the power of us children and our families have been in the hands of a few, it’s like a dictatorship! With this consultation we feel like we are truly part of the Parish.” (South Africa)

“When the principles will be enforced, families will have a respite and communities will become aware of their responsibilities in protecting children.” (Indonesia)

“The church should help to make sure that everyone knows about the rights of children and adolescents.” (South Africa)

“People should write to all the governments and tell them how important it is that all babies get a birth certificate.” (South Africa)

“Recycling needs to be made a priority for churches.” (South Africa)

“In their sermons, pastors should use a language that we can understand and not make us tired and bored.” (Nigeria)

“The church should involve children in decision making, provide them with good drinking water/snacks, and make church service very interesting for them.” (Nigeria)

“There should be more creative methodologies in churches.” (Indonesia)

“Church is a place where you are taught to stop lying, stop beating your younger ones, change your behaviour.” (Nigeria)

“What would Jesus think about how we treat the earth?” (South Africa)

“If we feel that we are important in the church and that our voices are heard, then we will grow with self-esteem and dignity and a sense of security, and we will become regular church – goers.” (India)

The “Principles for Child-Friendly Churches”

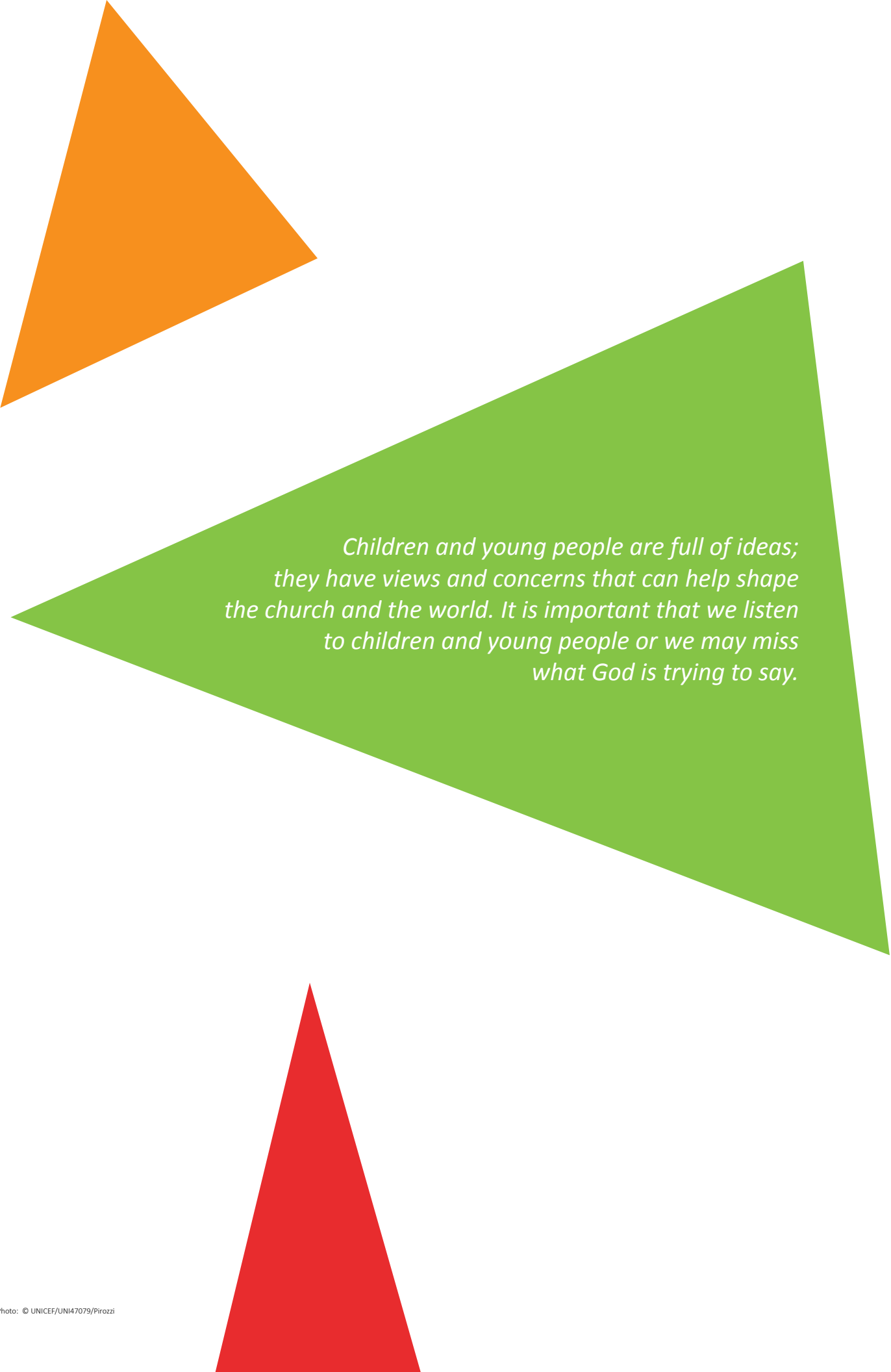
Explained to 0 to 10-year-old Children



**World Council
of Churches**

unicef





*Children and young people are full of ideas;
they have views and concerns that can help shape
the church and the world. It is important that we listen
to children and young people or we may miss
what God is trying to say.*

The World Council of Churches is a group of 345 churches that are all working together to try to make our world a better place. It is also called the WCC. In 2013 a big meeting took place in Busan, a city in Korea, and over 5000 people attended. Some of the people were leaders of churches, some were young people like you, and all of them talked about how to make our world a better place.

Some of those people thought that churches should do more to take care of children, and at the end of their meeting they all signed a paper called “Putting Children at the Centre.” This meant that they all agreed that children and young people are very important, and that churches should work very hard at improving children’s lives, and also that the WCC should help them to be able to do this.

UNICEF is an organization that helps all children in the world to have food to eat, medicines to treat their illnesses, good schools to learn in, and families that care for them.

The WCC and UNICEF formed a partnership, and they have agreed to work very hard to create ideas to help make churches welcoming, safe, and fun places for children all over the world to be. These ideas needed to explain what churches could do to make them better places. Then, very importantly, they would encourage all the churches worldwide to use the ideas.

Churches that approve these ideas agree to look for ways to help all people understand the rights of children. For example they can put a list of children’s rights on a message board. They can encourage people in charge of a village/city/country to act when the rights of children are not being taken seriously. They give children the opportunity to say what they think and how they feel. They tell journalist to talk about children’s rights and children’s views on TV and radio.

These are the ideas of the Principles:



1. The church needs to do everything possible to keep children safe.

a) Making sure that children feel safe in their church community and that they would know who to go to for help if they had a problem.

Sometimes adults don’t treat children well – they touch them in ways that make them feel uncomfortable or force them to do things they don’t want to do.

Churches should:

- set up – together with children - safe rules and instructions for activities with children, for the selection of staff and volunteers, and for how they care for children, making sure these are people you can trust;
- pay special attention to the protection of children with disabilities;
- create ways to help children report when someone makes them feel uncomfortable or if they experience violence or something bad;
- be able to immediately stop whoever is making children feel uncomfortable or being violent with them.

b) Finding ways to help stop children being hurt by other people in villages/cities/countries and throughout the world.

Sometimes children get hurt by other people. This happens to children everywhere, in all countries and in both rich and poor families.

Churches should be safe places that offer help and support to children.

They should:

- support parents and offer teaching on how to keep children safe

- help people understand that it is always wrong to hurt children just to make them do what they want.

c) Thinking of ways that churches can protect children in dangerous situations (for example: storms, earthquakes, wars).

When dangerous situations happen, children need to be protected.

Churches should always help and support children in danger, by:

- being close to and helping children who are scared;
- trying to convince governments and all kinds of groups (like schools, associations, youth clubs) to pay special attention to the needs of children during emergencies.

d) Helping all children to have something called a “birth certificate”.

The “birth certificate” should be given when a baby is born. This important document helps children to get medicine if they are sick and to be able to go to school. All children are important and they should all have a birth certificate.

Churches should:

- help all governments and all people to understand how important this is to a child;
- keep records of children who are baptized.



2. The church needs to make all decisions together with children when these decisions have something to do with children’s lives. They also have to plan activities for children together with children.

Sometimes adults don’t pay attention to what children think and don’t listen to their ideas.

a) In church activities and planning for services and praying.

Churches that support these ideas want to include all children, their families, and caregivers when making decisions about church life.

Churches should:

- consider the needs of any children with disabilities in the church, including when planning all activities;
- encourage all church leaders and church councils to be trained in the rights of a child, and in how to listen to children and respect them;
- create and use prayer/service resources that help children, their families, or caregivers to feel welcome and participate in their own style and tradition, and that focus on the needs of their day-to-day lives;
- use creative ideas in church to discover children’s views, ideas, and worries;
- ask all children, families, and caregivers what they need and would like before planning their activities, and really listen to them;
- include children speaking minority languages.

b) In society (society means a large group of people including you, your family, your school, your community, your leaders, politicians, and decision-makers).

Children who feel safe, valued, and included in their churches want to share their ideas and suggestions and involve others. Churches should ask society to listen to children's ideas.

In particular, churches should:

- make people understand how much children and adolescents can contribute to decisions affecting their lives and how important it is to give them a chance to do so;
- create spaces for children and adolescents to tell politicians and decision-makers what they think about decisions that affect their lives;
- help children develop their own ideas by informing them of what is going on and teaching them how to express their views to adults;
- support children sharing their views and ideas with society so that their views and ideas are listened to and taken into account.



3. The church needs to organize activities with children to protect our planet and to deal with problems caused by climate change.

The lives of children will be affected by future climate change. Also, children get hurt more easily than adults when there are big problems caused by climate change – like storms or lack of water.

Churches should:

a) Inside the church.

explain to children what climate change is and how it is a problem for them and for the world;

- offer children the chance to help shape the future by being involved in activities and training and included in making decisions on any issues about protecting the earth;
- explore how eco-friendly they are (maybe give awards to those churches who are very good at it) and then include children in deciding on any changes that need to be made;
- help people deal with problems caused by climate change.

b) In society (society means a large group of people including you, your family, your school, your community, your leaders, politicians, and decision-makers).

- tell those who are in charge to respect the promises they made on climate change;
- help people deal with problems caused by climate change, like storms or lack of water.

The “Principles for Child-Friendly Churches”


Explained to 11 to 18-year-old Children and Adolescents



**World Council
of Churches**

unicef





*Children and young people are full of ideas;
they have views and concerns that can help shape
the church and the world. It is important that we listen
to children and young people or we may miss
what God is trying to say.*

The idea started in 2013, when the World Council of Churches (WCC), an organization that rallies 345 churches in the world behind joint goals, held a big meeting in Busan, a city in South Korea. In this meeting, the 10th Assembly of the WCC, over 5000 people, including leaders of churches and many young people, discussed how to improve our world. A group there discussed that churches should do more to support children throughout the world. At the end they signed a declaration entitled “Putting Children at the Centre” – a text in which they agree the churches can do a lot to improve children’s lives. They said that the WCC should help them do this.

In 2015, the WCC signed a partnership with UNICEF – the United Nations Children’s Fund. These partners agreed to work with many experts on “Principles for Child-friendly Churches.” This document should explain what churches can do for you, and to then ask all churches that are members of the WCC to turn these principles into action. Some of the most important experts on these questions are you, the adolescents themselves.

Churches that approve these ideas agree to look for ways to help all people understand the rights of children. For example they can put a list of children’s rights on a message board. They can encourage people in charge of a village/city/country to act when the rights of children are not being taken seriously. They give children the opportunity to say what they think and how they feel. They tell journalist to talk about children’s rights and children’s views on TV and radio.

Here is a short overview of the Principles:



1. The church needs to do everything possible to protect children.

a) Making sure children and adolescents are safe within the church community; also making sure children and adolescents know whom to ask for help if they have a problem.

All over the world some children and adolescents, boys and girls, can be victims of harassment or sexual abuse by adults. Often the perpetrators of these acts are persons known to and trusted by the children and adolescents.

Churches that agree to this should make sure they have and respect up-to-date safeguarding policies and procedures that include:

- the way they create their activities;
- the way they select their staff and volunteers;
- how their staff and volunteers as well as children and adolescents are allowed to behave;
- how children and adolescents can safely let someone know if they are being subject to violence or abuse;
- how churches can immediately stop whoever is abusing and harassing children and adolescents in any way.

Children and adolescents should participate in the set-up of these safeguarding policies. Churches should also pay special attention to the protection of children with disabilities.

b) Helping to stop violence against girls and boys in the village/city/country and even throughout the world.

Violence against children and adolescents unfortunately still happens in every country of the world, in every culture and ethnic group, whether families are well-educated or not, and whether they are rich or poor.

Churches should be safe places for all children and adolescents, offering help and support to girls and boys who are victims of violence. They should also help make the rest of the world a safe place for children and adolescents by spreading information on the risks and consequences.

In particular, churches commit to:

- helping families and communities understand that violence against children and adolescents is always wrong, including how to prevent physical, sexual and emotional abuse, neglect, family violence, bullying, and online risks;
- promoting the prohibition of corporal punishment of children and adolescents (corporal punishment means punishing by using physical violence – spanking, etc.);
- opposing traditions followed by families and communities that are harmful to children and adolescents (for example, children getting married or being sexually abused by family members);
- trying to convince mayors, politicians, and governments to create laws and structures to help prevent violence against children and adolescents from happening;
- organizing activities to try to convince all society about the need to stop violence against children and adolescents.

c) Helping to protect children and adolescents if a big unexpected problem happens near the church (for example, hurricanes, earthquakes or wars).

When big unexpected problems happen, children and adolescents - especially girls - can be at risk: they may not be able to get to school or to a doctor, or they can be separated from their families and have no one to protect them from violence or abuse.

Churches should always help families and communities to be ready to react in the right way in case of an emergency. They should make sure their staff and volunteers are able to protect children and adolescents in case of an emergency.

In particular, churches commit to:

- being close to and helping children and adolescents who have experienced a frightening situation and are scared;
- trying to convince governments and all kinds of groups (like schools, associations, youth clubs) to pay special attention to the needs of children and adolescents during emergencies;
- consulting with and involving children and adolescents in the planning of activities for helping people affected by an emergency;
- always speaking and cooperating with people of other religions to make sure all children and adolescents are protected during and after emergencies.

d) Helping all children get a document called a “birth certificate”.

A “birth certificate” is needed for a person to get support if they are ill, to go to school, and to access many other important services.

Churches can help all children have a birth certificate by:

- keeping a record whenever they perform a baptism (these records can help children obtain a birth certificate);
- trying to convince the governments of those countries that do not give a birth certificate to all children of the importance of doing so;
- telling all families and members of their community how important it is that they request a birth certificate when a child is born and teaching them how to do it.



2. The church needs to make it possible for girls and boys to participate in decisions and activities affecting their lives.

Sometimes adults don't pay attention to the ideas of children and adolescents and don't allow them to have a say in decisions and participate in activities that affect their lives.

a) In church activities and planning for services and praying.

In particular, churches commit to:

- considering the needs of any child or adolescent with disabilities in all aspects of the church's life, including when planning all activities;
- teaching all people in the church about children and adolescent's rights and about the fact that they should be allowed to participate in church activities;
- creating and using prayer/service resources for children, adolescents, their families or caregivers so that worship addresses the needs of their day-to-day lives and they can easily understand it and feel welcome;
- using creative ideas in church to discover the children' and adolescents' views, ideas, and worries;
- consulting children, adolescents, and their families or caregivers and considering their needs when developing church activities, and really listening to their opinions;
- ensuring children speaking minority languages can participate in all aspects of the church's life.

b) In society (society means a large group of people including you, your family, your school, your community, your leaders, politicians and decision-makers).

Churches should ask society to listen to and act on children and adolescents' ideas. Children and adolescents who feel safe, valued, and included in their churches want to share their ideas, suggestions, and involve others.

In particular, churches commit to:

- making people understand how much children and adolescents can contribute to decisions affecting their lives and how important it is to give them a chance to do so;
- creating spaces for children and adolescents to tell politicians and decision-makers what they think about decisions that affect their lives;
- making sure girls and boys know how to keep safe online and who to go to if they have something that worries or frightens them;
- supporting children and adolescents in sharing their views and ideas with society so that their views and ideas are listened to and taken into account.



3. The church needs to organize projects with boys and girls in the church to help protect our planet and to cope with problems caused by climate change.

Children and adolescents are those whose lives will be affected the most in the future, if our planet is not respected. Also, children and adolescents are more likely than adults to be affected by current problems caused by climate change – like storms or droughts.

Churches should:

a) Inside the church.

- convince families and members of their community to make sure they reduce waste and don't pollute;
- explore how eco-friendly they are (consider establishing a system of official acknowledgment/rewards for churches which take concrete steps to be eco-friendly) and then include children and adolescents in deciding on any changes that need to be made;
- help people deal with problems caused by climate change, like storms or droughts.

b) In society (society means a large group of people including you, your family, your school, your community, your leaders, politicians, and decision-makers).

- try to convince mayors, politicians, and governments to take concrete actions that address climate change and respect the promises they made on climate change;
- help people cope with problems caused by climate change.