

Suggestions,  
Background  
Materials, and  
Templates for  
Consultations

## Guide for Consultations with Children and Adolescents on the Draft **“PRINCIPLES FOR CHILD-FRIENDLY CHURCHES”**



World Council  
of Churches



This guide is an adaptation of the “Consultation Package and Facilitator’s Guide for Child and Adolescent Participation” in the Children’s Rights and Business Principles Initiative (BRCPi).

Great support from World Vision has been received in drafting this guide.

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## Introduction

The views and ideas of children and adolescents are of utmost importance for the success of the “Principles for Child-friendly Churches” currently being developed. The World Council of Churches (WCC), UNICEF, and World Vision have therefore jointly worked on this guide to support church members and partners interested in conducting consultations with children and adolescents on the draft “Principles for Child-friendly Churches.” The feedback, observations, and suggestions stemming from consultations with children and adolescents will help inform the development of the “Principles for Child-friendly Churches.” A group of “writers” (the [Core Group of Experts](#)) has been formed to help develop the Principles. This group will be responsible for considering all the feedback received through the consultations and integrating those suggestions as much as possible.

The consultations with children will take very different shapes depending on the opportunities for such exchanges in church communities. You may choose to focus on just one Principle for your exchanges with children, or you may ask for their views and ideas on the entire initiative.

Within this guide you will find:

- Information about how to prepare for the consultation;
- Important details/suggestions for ensuring we accurately document the young people’s recommendations;
- Various group activities to support discussion, learning, and team building;
- Ideas relating to next steps and follow-up;
- A template to share the results from the consultation with children with the WCC and UNICEF.

## STEP 1 – PREPARATION AND PLANNING

If possible, we encourage you to involve children as early as possible in the planning process. For example, if appropriate in your context, you can work with young people to prepare the meeting, develop the agenda, and even help facilitate the meeting.

## Minimum Standards in Children’s Participation

The UN Committee on the Rights of the Child General Comment No. 12 (2009) on the right of the child to be heard describes the basic requirements for implementing the right of the child to be heard. Minimum standards include: transparency, voluntary participation, creating a child-friendly environment, equality, protection, safety, qualified staff, and follow-up. (See Annex 2 – Minimum Standards in Children’s Participation.)

## Safety and Protection

One of the standard in children’s participation is to ensure the safety and protection of all children and adolescents. In particular, the following are important considerations that should be taken into account during the planning phase of any consultation with children:

- **Prevention of harm in child participation:** This consultation aims to empower children as citizens and should minimize any risk of harm or negative consequence resulting from their participation in this process.
- **Ethics:** Child participation activities are to be designed and implemented to adhere to principles and ethics that keep the best interests of children as the top priority.
- **Informed consent in child participation:** Child participation activities are to be voluntary and inclusive (especially of the most vulnerable children), and both children and

parents/caregivers are to make informed decisions about participation, including due consideration of risks that could be associated with the activity.

- **Child travel:** If children have to travel in order to participate in this consultation, the parents or caregivers, or other legally required entity or individual, will give informed consent prior to the travel. The child's health, safety, and well-being are the most important priorities during travel.
- **Safety:** It is important to identify places where children feel safe to participate and be part of the consultation, taking into consideration children's opinions and inputs.

### **Rapporteur**

Ensuring that you accurately record and capture the recommendations and perspectives of the children and adolescents is a top priority. Please consider, ahead of time, who will be responsible for taking notes during the consultation(s). (See Annex 5 – Rapporteur Checklist.)

### **Photos**

Photos may include pictures of the participating children and adolescents or they can include images chosen by the children, including artwork or other forms of expression. Please adhere to relevant protection policies and obtain proper consent. Children should be informed that this is voluntary. Children (and parents/guardians) should be informed that their images may appear online, in national and international publications, and/or in any resources relating to this initiative. (See Annex 4 – Sample Consent Form for Parents/Guardians.)

### **Supplies and Resources**

Each consultation will be different, and you should take into account your resources and capacity when planning. Please allow some time to think about and plan for all the material you might be needing (e.g., flipchart paper/board, papers, markers/pens, printed materials – see attached documents). Please also try to identify an appropriate venue for the consultation (a location that is welcoming, accessible, and child friendly).

### **Energizers and Icebreakers**

As the facilitator, it is important that you pay attention to the participants and take breaks when needed. It is a good idea to have a list of “energizers” ready for when your group needs a bit of a boost. (See Annex 4 – Energizers and Icebreakers.)

### **Time**

We estimate that you will need a total of about 8 hours to complete the full consultation with children and adolescents; times will vary according to the activities you choose and the size of your group. Depending on your team / resource people, you can break it up over a number of days. We recommend that you consider doing it over the course of two days, but the consultation process is flexible to accommodate your needs/preferences.

### **Participants**

All participants should be under 18 years of age. We suggest having no more than 12 to 15 children/adolescents in a consultation. It is recommended to consult separately: pre-school children; children aged 6 to 12; and adolescents. As you invite children and adolescents to participate, please consider the group's gender balance and diversity (try to include as much as



possible young people from urban and rural settings; of different economic backgrounds; with disabilities; belonging to indigenous and minority groups, etc.).

### **Facilitators**

It is important to select facilitators who are familiar with the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and have the skills to facilitate this process with children/adolescents. Alternatively, facilitators should consider devoting some time prior to the consultation to training for this consultation. Some of the attachments to this guide might be useful for facilitators to build or refresh their knowledge on the CRC, including by exploring the issue of children's rights from a biblical perspective.

### **STEP 2 – INVITATION**

Once you have decided when, where, how, and who will be invited to participate in the consultation, it is time to send out the invitation and other related materials. (See Annex 3 – Sample of Invitation.)

Along with the invitation, please include a copy of Annex 1 (Questions & Answers on the Consultations with Children around the “Principles for Child-friendly Churches”). Ideally, children will receive these details at least one week in advance of the consultation.

Note: Before the meeting, please circulate a consent form for children and parents/guardians regarding their participation in the meeting and any photos that will be taken during the consultation. (See Annex 4 – Sample Consent Form for Parents/Guardians.)

### **STEP 3 – WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION** (estimated time: 30 minutes)

#### **Introductions** (5 minutes)

Start off by introducing the team that will be supporting the meeting: for example, the facilitator(s), translator(s), rapporteur(s), photographer, etc. Ask the young people to briefly introduce themselves and why they are attending this meeting.

#### **Important Information to Be Shared**

Before you begin, share the following details and information with the participants:

- Child Protection
  - Please remind participants that their participation is voluntary.
  - This may also be a good time to share with them the Minimum Standards in Children's Participation.
  - Please share with the group the details of all child protection policies and procedures. These include the following:
    - Issues relating to disclosure of information/privacy if sensitive issues arise. The facilitators should maintain appropriate confidentiality for individuals and sensitive issues raised during the consultation. They may disclose general information about the issue in order to support learning and accountability, to prevent future incidents, and as required by law.
    - Information about where they can access support if needed.
- Rapporteur
  - Please explain the role of the rapporteur.

- Rapporteurs may want to talk about their role and remind participants that their ideas and recommendations will be shared/documented, but that their names and personal details will not be shared (only ages, gender, and country).
- Photos
  - If you have chosen to take photos or to videotape the consultation, talk to the participants about their rights before any pictures are taken. Explain how the photos/video will be used.
  - As much as possible, the participants should feel ownership and control of the photos/video (for example, ask if there are any participants who would like to volunteer to work with the photographer after the consultation to select images).
- Logistics
  - Make any relevant or needed announcements, for example:
    - location of the washrooms;
    - details about snacks or lunch;
    - details about transportation after the meeting;
    - how to make a call if they need to.

**STEP 4 – EXPECTATIONS AND AGENDA** (estimated time: 30 minutes)

**Introducing the Principles for Child-friendly Churches and this Consultation’s Objectives**

Now it is time to share with all participants the goals and objectives of the meeting and to introduce the idea of the “Principles for Child-friendly Churches” (see Annex 1 – Questions & Answers on the Consultations with Children around the “Principles for Child-friendly Churches”). Let them know that groups of children and adolescents in many different countries are talking about these. Ask the group if they have any additional questions before you move on.

**Suggested Activity: Defining Expectations**

1. Provide each participant with 3 pieces of paper and a marker (if your group is larger, you may want to adapt this for small group discussion). Each paper should identify the user’s age and sex.
  - On the first piece of paper, ask them to write an answer to the question, “What do you personally hope to gain from this meeting/experience?”
  - On the second piece of paper, ask them write an answer to the question: “What is something you hope to see happen during this meeting?”
  - On the third piece of paper, ask them write an answer to the question: “What do you want to see happen after this meeting?”
2. Ask participants to tape their “expectations” on the wall in columns.
3. Read each expectation out loud to the entire group. Look for similar groupings: for example, expectations about learning new things. Move the cards into their grouping as they are read out loud.

You should refer to these expectations throughout the discussion and afterwards to ensure you are meeting expectations and understanding individual and group goals/priorities.

**Agenda**

It is a good idea to have the agenda clearly displayed in the room, so that everyone can see it. (See Annex 6 – Sample of Agenda.)

### **STEP 5 – CHILDREN’S RIGHTS REFRESHER** (estimated time: 60 minutes)

These activities are intended as an introduction to Children’s Rights, or as a refresher in case your group already has a good understanding of it. (See Annex 8 – Child-friendly Version of the CRC.)

#### **Suggested Activity: Rights versus Needs**

1. Write the following words or “headings” on 3 pieces of paper and tape each piece of paper on the wall so that they are a few feet apart from each other:  
Rights  
Needs  
Desires
2. Write the following words and “concepts” on separate pieces of smaller paper:

Clean water	Family reunification	Medicine
A tattoo	Designer clothes	Books
Fresh air	Education	Food
Shelter	Sports Equipment	Television
Join a cult	Family	Eyeglasses
Music CDs	Love	Library card
3. Divide the group into three groups and then provide each group with an equal number of words/concepts. Ask each group to work together and place their word/concept under the heading (right, need, desire) they feel is the most appropriate. Explain to the group that, at this point, there may not be a right or wrong answer and that there may be more than one correct answer.
4. Provide the participants an opportunity to explain why they have made some of the choices they have and ask participants from other groups if they agree or disagree.
5. Inform participants that the exercise will be revisited a little later on. Leave the information on the wall for the next activity and ask the rapporteur to record the information.

#### **Suggested Activity: Group Discussion**

Talk to the participants about their rights and their understanding of the CRC (Note that the discussion will vary according to your group’s current understanding of the Convention.). Please choose the questions that are appropriate to your group. Possible questions could include:

- Was anyone surprised by what they found in the CRC?
- Have they learned anything new about the CRC and their rights?
- Which rights do they think are the least understood and supported?
- Which rights are the most understood and supported?
- Which rights are addressed by the current initiative?

#### **Suggested Activity: Rights versus Needs Revisited**

This activity is a continuation of the first suggested activity, “rights versus needs.”

1. Ask each group to revisit the activity and their original placements of the words/concepts.
2. Do they want to make any changes? (Please record their discussion.)
3. What new information have they gained that makes them want to reconsider?
4. Ask groups to explain their new perspective.
5. To conclude the exercise, follow these recommendations:
  - Ask participants to review the text of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
  - What words/concepts are clearly defined as rights in the CRC?



If there is a high level of debate within your group, you may want to explore the following ideas:

- In cases where the exact language (e.g., books) is not found in the CRC, it is still possible to advocate for children's rights in other ways: for example, by asking that governments provide children with books to ensure their right to an education is fully realized.
- Different "needs" will be emphasized depending on the cultural context or country specific situations.

#### **STEP 6 – DEFINING THE CHURCH: WHAT IT IS, DOES, AND CAN DO** (estimated time: 90 minutes)

##### **Suggested Activity: What the Church Is**

1. Write in big letters the word "CHURCH" on a flipchart and post it to be visible to all.
2. Ask the children/youth: "What comes into your mind when you hear the word 'church'?"
3. Distribute crayons and paper to each participant and ask them to draw their thoughts.
4. Give them 7 minutes to draw and then ask them to share their drawing and explain it. (After each finishes sharing, put them on the wall.)
5. Write the key words they use to describe church on the flipchart.
6. The facilitator can then summarize what the children shared.

##### **Suggested Activity: What the Church Does**

1. Make 5 columns on the flipchart and name each of them as, respectively, "personal life," "family life," "community life," "country/region," and "world."
2. Ask participants, "In what ways does the church affect you in your *personal life*?" and write the outcome of the discussion in that column. Do the same for the other categories.
3. Now try to assign a "right" to the replies. In this way you will have identified the "rights" that churches are concerned with.
4. Explore some of the following questions with the group:
  - From our discussion, does it appear that churches have more to do with some rights than others?
  - If yes, which ones?
  - Are there any other rights that churches deal with that didn't appear on the list?

##### **Suggested Activity: What the Church Can Do**

With the previous activity, we saw the different ways churches deal with children's rights. Now we need to ask ourselves, "How can churches better support and respect children's rights? What do they need to be doing and where do the opportunities exist to do these things?"

1. Write and post the following themes in a place all participants can see:
  - The church should make it possible for girls and boys to participate in church activities and decisions and activities affecting their lives.
  - The church should do everything possible to protect children.
  - The church should help to make sure that everyone knows about the rights of children and adolescents.
  - The church should organize projects with boys and girls in the church to help protect our planet and your future.
2. Provide the explanation above and ask participants:
  - Do you feel that these points are a good summary of the different things the churches can do to support and respect your rights?

- Are there things you think churches should do for children that aren't covered by these themes?
3. Once you have a final list of "opportunities/themes," it is time for the group to decide which ones they would like to discuss. The group may decide that they want to look at all the themes, or they may choose 2 or 3 to focus on. The following questions are suggested in exploring each theme:
- What are the current problems related to this theme?
  - What should churches be doing to fix these problems and to better support and respect children's rights?
  - What other things could churches do, in general, to support and respect children's rights? (Note: Don't focus only on "fixing" existing problems, but also ask what churches can be doing to prevent problems and how they can advance and support good work/efforts that support children's rights.)

Please be sure to record the group discussion; and if you were working in small groups, provide each group the opportunity to report back and hear feedback from the other participants.

### **STEP 7 – INTRODUCING THE PRINCIPLES** (estimated time: 15 minutes)

#### **Recap**

Prior to saying goodbye to the group, please briefly recap the day's discussion and accomplishments.

Please review the agenda for the next day with them and provide an overview of the preparation they need to do ahead of time (see below).

Ask the group if they are satisfied with the consultation so far and if there are any changes/adjustments that need to be made for the upcoming discussions.

Ask if anyone would like to volunteer to provide the group with a recap to start off the next day's agenda.

#### **Homework**

To support their discussions and planning, we have developed a child-friendly version of the Principles (See Annex 9 – Child-friendly Version of the Principles). Share the child-friendly version of the Principles with all participants and explain to them that for homework they should review the draft Principles and, using the discussions they have had today, reply to the following questions:

- Are there things missing in the current draft?
- Are there new things included that the group didn't consider?
- What are some of the strong points about the Principles?
- What are some of the weak points about the Principles?

Remind participants that while their comments will all be taken seriously and considered by the people writing the Principles, not all recommendations can be incorporated. When possible, they will be provided with information and updates on the ongoing drafting process and development of the Principles.

*Note:* Please do not hand out copies of the draft Principles until after Steps 4 to 7 have been completed. We would like to ensure young people have identified their own priorities prior to presenting them with the draft Principles.

Please consider a closing activity to conclude the day and thank everyone for their time and great insight. Remind participants about the day, time, and location for the next meeting.

### **STEP 8 – DISCUSSING THE PRINCIPLES** (estimated time: 90 minutes)

Welcome participants back to the consultation, and do a group energizer before you get started. Review the agenda with everyone.

If a group of volunteers agreed to do a recap of day 1 (see Step 8), please invite them to do their presentation; otherwise, please provide the participants with a summary.

If possible, please display key materials/charts/information discussed previously.

Remind participants of their homework and the questions they were asked to consider.

Note: You may want to have extra copies of the draft Principles on hand in case someone forgot theirs.

Ask if there were any terms, concepts, or sections that were unclear?

Inform participants that later on you will also be exploring what happens after the Principles are finalized. It will be helpful to keep in mind that after you've talked about what they think about the Principles you will explore how to make sure that churches are following them and what role children should have in promoting them.

### **Group Discussion**

The draft Principles has the following main sections:

1. The church can make it possible for girls and boys to participate in church activities and decisions and activities affecting their lives:
  - a) In church activities and planning for services and praying;
  - b) In society (society means a large group of people including you, your family, your school, your community, and your leaders, politicians, and decision-makers): Churches should ask society to listen to and act on children's and adolescents' ideas.
2. The church can do everything possible to protect children:
  - a) Make sure children and adolescents are safe within the church community. Also make sure children and adolescents know whom to ask for help if they have a problem;
  - b) Help to stop violence against girls and boys throughout the village/city/country and even throughout the world;
  - c) Help protect children and adolescents if a big unexpected problem happens near the church (for example, in countries where there can be big storms, earthquakes, or wars);
  - d) Help all children get a document called a "birth certificate," because this paper is needed for a person to get support if they are ill, or to go to school, or to access many other rights.
3. The church can help to make sure that everyone knows about the rights of children and adolescents; and tell the people in charge of their village/city/country to act when the rights of children and adolescents are not properly respected.
4. The church can organize projects with boys and girls to help protect our planet and your future.

### **Session 1**

1. Ask Participants to sign up for one "small group session." Post the headings for each Principle on the board and ask each participant to choose the one they are most interested in by writing their name next to that Principle.

If there is little interest in one section, please explain that everyone will have the opportunity to comment on every section (during large group sharing), but that the small groups will get the conversation started and the initial ideas on paper.

2. Ask if anyone will volunteer to move their names and join the smaller group. Ideally, there will be a minimum of 2 to 3 people in each group.

If there is absolutely no interest in a section and no one wants to volunteer, this is okay; the participants are here to share their expertise and explore areas of interest to them. Explain to the group that they will not have any specific recommendations for that section.

If appropriate, please explore with the group why there is little interest in a particular section. (This may be a helpful insight for the “writers.”)

If, on the other hand, there is a great deal of interest in one section (e.g., ensuring a child-safe church environment), consider having one session with multiple small groups all discussing the same topic. The remaining sections can be explored in session 2. Be flexible and adapt to your group’s interests.

3. Once the groups are established, instruct each group to do the following:

- Review the draft Principles.
- Consider the discussions the group has already had (for example: during Step 8) and their personal experiences, and discuss the following:
  - Are there things missing in this section?
  - Are there things included that the group did not consider? (In other words, did they find some strong points in the existing draft?)
  - What do they feel are the most important points that need to be included?
  - Do they have any other comments or recommendations about this section?

Provide each group with approximately 20 minutes for the small group discussion.

Once finished, ask them to share their discussion with the full group and invite all participants to give feedback.

### **Sessions 2 and 3** (if time is available)

Ask participants to sign up for their second small group session and proceed with the same questions as above. Please be sure to carefully record all of their comments and recommendations.

### **STEP 9 – MAKING IT HAPPEN** (estimated time: 60 minutes)

In discussion, as a large group or in smaller groups, please explore the following sections and questions:

#### **Benefits**

- How can churches benefit if they support/sign the Principles? (The answer to this question may help us find ways to convince other churches to “sign on.”)
- How can children benefit?
- How can families and communities benefit?

#### **Monitoring**

- How can we know if churches are fulfilling their promises?
- What role can children and young people play in monitoring their promises?
- What role can the churches themselves play?
- What role can non-governmental organizations or other groups play?

### **STEP 10 – NEXT STEPS** (estimated time: 30 minutes)

All the different recommendations and ideas will be sent to the “writers” who will have the challenging task of trying to incorporate the many different ideas.

Tell participants that you will share with them the recommendations that other young people in other countries/regions made about the draft principles. And, of course, you will send them a copy of the Principles once they have been finalized.

### **First Steps**

1. Recommendations
  - Ask whether any of the young people would like to volunteer to work with the rapporteur to finalize the report.
  - It may be a good idea to develop two reports: the first being a longer and very detailed report (mostly your meeting minutes for submission to the “writers”) and a second, 2-to-3-page summary of recommendations.
2. Pictures
  - You may want to ask participants if they would like to help you in selecting photos from the consultation.
3. Communication
  - Make the necessary plans, as a group, about how you will stay in touch with each other, distribute updates, plan for follow-up meetings, etc.

### **Short- and Long-Term Planning**

When the Principles are finalized, they will be “launched” and released to the public. Consider the following questions when making your recommendations:

- Does the Principles initiative offer your group any new opportunities they would like to take advantage of? Please explain.
- How might children and adolescents use the Principles?
- Are there any planned opportunities/events that your group would like to take advantage of? Please provide details.
- Does your group need to or want to create an event or project to advance its goals?
- Other than funding, are there any immediate resources that would be helpful for your future work/goals? For example: advocacy materials; resources; guides; reports; child-friendly resources, etc. Please be as specific as possible.

### **STEP 11 – EVALUATION AND TEAM WRAP UP** (estimated time: 30 minutes)

1. Please ask the group if they have any final questions or comments.
2. Explain that every event, consultation, and get together is an opportunity for us to learn. We get to gather new information and we get to learn more about our process, about what works, and about what can be improved next time.
3. Let participants know that we would like to hear from them and get their feedback about this consultation. Please write the following statements in a place where all participants can see them:
  - The best thing about this consultation was ...
  - A new idea for me was ...
  - I am leaving with the hope that ...
4. Please go around in a circle and ask participants to finish the statements.
5. Do an icebreaker as wrap up.



## **STEP 12 – SHARING THE RESULTS**

The outcomes of your consultation will be of great importance to further strengthen the “Principles for Child-friendly Churches.” Please remember to send the following documents to Frederique Seidel ([Frederique.Seidel@wcc-coe.org](mailto:Frederique.Seidel@wcc-coe.org)) and Caterina Tino ([ctino@unicef.org](mailto:ctino@unicef.org)):

- Details about the consultation (Step 3 – Information Collection).
- Rapporteur checklist (Annex 5).
- Any other notes of the meeting you may want to share.
- Photos of the consultation if participants and legal guardians agreed that photos can be shared with the WCC and UNICEF (e.g., for articles on our website).

## **ANNEX 1 – QUESTIONS & ANSWERS ON THE CONSULTATIONS WITH CHILDREN AROUND THE “PRINCIPLES FOR CHILD-FRIENDLY CHURCHES”**

### **Questions & Answers on the Consultations with Children around the “Principles for Child-friendly Churches”**

#### **Introduction**

This document has been prepared to support you – children and adolescents – to better understand how churches affect your lives, families, communities and also your rights. Through this document you will also learn about the “Principles for Child-friendly Churches.” The purpose of this document is to provide a practical resource to respond to frequently asked questions regarding “Principles for Child-friendly Churches.”

#### **What are children’s rights?**

Every child has the same human rights. Some of your human rights have to do with the basic physical needs to stay alive. For example, you have the right to food, water, shelter and basic health care. Some of your human rights have to do with how other people treat you. You have the right to be treated with dignity and respect. Some of your rights have to do with your need to be cared for, to develop and to grow, and to be part of your communities. You have the right to an education, to express your own ideas and opinions, to information and protection, and to participate in making decisions about issues that affect you. You also have the right to not be discriminated against because of who you are or where you come from.

All of these rights can be found in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. On 20 November 1989 the United Nations General Assembly adopted the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child – also known as the CRC. The CRC sets out the human rights that all children, every boy and girl, everywhere in the world have.

#### **What is children’s participation?**

Participation is:

- having the opportunity to be involved in making decisions that affect you;
- being involved in something or playing a part in something;
- having information about things that are important to you and other children;
- being able to have your voice heard; and
- having your ideas respected and taken seriously.

All girls and boys have the right to participate. All girls and boys have the right to have their voices heard and taken seriously.

#### **What is a church?**

A church is both a place and a community.

Church is a community of people that believe in Jesus Christ as their Saviour. Church is people gathered together with the shared purpose of praying together. Church is a special place where good things should happen, where prayers and blessings are offered in a safe, peaceful setting.

Church is also the name of the building where they meet to pray together, listen to texts of the Bible, and learn how to live in accordance with Jesus’ teachings. This building can be very fancy or very simple. Church can be a special room, set apart for the community, for people to talk with God. Church can be indoors (with walls, ceiling, and floor) or outdoors, without walls and maybe only a thin roof.

There are many types of church community, but they all aim to live their lives in accordance with the Bible, building friendships and helping each other.

### **What do churches have to do with my rights?**

Governments/states have the main responsibility for respecting, protecting, and fulfilling your rights. However, there are many other groups and parts of our community that also have a role to play, including churches. Churches have an active role to play in the promotion of children's rights as set in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, including but not limited to: the right to non-discrimination; the best interests of the child as a primary consideration in all actions concerning children; the right to life, survival, and development; and the child's right to express his or her views freely in "all matters affecting the child," those views being given due weight.

There is an ongoing discussion that churches have a wider responsibility to respect children's rights. This means they must make sure they take steps to ensure that child rights are respected. Through upholding and promoting the Convention on the Rights of the Child, churches are responding to their call to serve the needy and vulnerable people, including children.

### **What are the "Principles for Child-friendly Churches"?**

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 5,000 people, including leaders of churches and many young people, discussed how to improve the world. A group there discussed that churches should do more to support children throughout the world. At the end they signed a Declaration, called "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.

About a year ago the WCC signed a partnership with UNICEF – the United Nations Children's Fund. As part of this partnership it was agreed to work with many experts on "Principles for Child-friendly Churches." This document should explain what churches can do for you and should ask all WCC member churches to turn these Principles into action. Some of the most knowledgeable on these questions are of course you, the children and adolescents themselves.

### **What do the Principles hope to achieve?**

Through the Principles it is expected to achieve the following:

1. The church can make it possible for girls and boys to participate in church activities and decisions and activities affecting their lives:
  - a) In church activities and planning for services and praying;
  - b) In society (society means a large group of people including you, your family, your school, your community, and your leaders, politicians and decision-makers): Churches should ask society to listen to and act on children's and adolescents' ideas.
2. The church can do everything possible to protect children:
  - a) Make sure children and adolescents are safe within the church community. Also make sure children and adolescents know whom to ask for help if they have a problem;
  - b) Help to stop violence against girls and boys throughout the village/city/country and even throughout the world;
  - c) Help protect children and adolescents if a big unexpected problem happens near the church (for example, in countries where there can be big storms, earthquakes, or wars);
  - d) Help all children get a document called a "birth certificate," because this paper is needed for a person to get support if they are ill, or to go to school, or to access many other rights.
3. The church can help to make sure that everyone knows about the rights of children and adolescents, and tell the people in charge of their village/city/country to act when the rights of children and adolescents are not properly respected.

4. The church can organize projects with boys and girls to help protect our planet and your future.

### **Why are the Principles Needed?**

The objective of these Principles is to promote and guide efforts by churches to apply a child-rights approach within their communities, but also to fully develop their potential as child-rights advocates, contributing to the improvement of children's and adolescents' lives in society at large.

The "Principles for Child-friendly Churches" will help to make churches welcoming and safe places for children all over the world. The principles will also explain what churches could do to encourage all churches worldwide to put these suggestions into practice.

### **How will the principles be developed?**

The Principles will be developed using different ways of collecting information and opinions; for example:

- Drafting the principles: A working group with representation from many organizations (churches, non-governmental organizations, and UNICEF) was formed. This working group drafted the "Principles for Child-friendly Churches," which are going to ensure that churches act responsibly and protect children and their rights.
- Consultations: Meetings and consultations with many different groups are being organized to talk about the Principles and how to improve them. These meetings will be taking place in different regions and countries and the participants will include churches, children, adolescents, and more.

### **Why will children and adolescents be involved in the "Principles for Child-friendly Churches"?**

We want to consult with children and adolescents on the "Principles for Child-friendly Churches" because we:

- recognize the value of children's knowledge and contributions to these principles;
- are committed to share experience, expertise, and accurate information with children;
- want to learn from children and seek out their input and feedback on these principles;
- want to ensure the best interest of the child by including their input in these principles;
- are working toward respect for the rights of children in communities and at the national and international level;
- want to help children and adults understand their rights and responsibilities;
- want to intentionally provide opportunities for children to make decisions and implement them; and
- want to share decision-making between adults and children;

### **How will children and adolescents be involved in the "Principles for Child-friendly Churches"?**

If you are reading this, you likely have already been asked to participate in a meeting, consultation, or other event. Here are some other ways we hope to support the participation of other children and adolescent:

- Reaching out: We will identify children, adolescents, and churches and invite them to support the initiative.
- Holding consultations and do research: We will ask children in each region to explore church roles and responsibilities to support and respect children's rights. We will map and collect information of known initiatives and case studies.
- Creating and providing resources. Various resources (for example: facilitator guides, questions, background information) will be made available to support all consultations, including groups in remote areas and the most vulnerable children.

- **Documenting:** Through film and publications (reports and resources targeting both children and adults) we will document your recommendations and the consultation process.
- **Discussing implementation, following up, and monitoring:** We want to hear from you, what needs to happen to ensure the Principles are actually used. What long term role should children and adolescents have? How do we make sure churches are doing what they promised to do?

### **When will all of this happen?**

There are different opportunities to be involved, for example:

- From March 2016, different children and adolescent groups will be talking about the Principles and trying to decide what information should be included. During this time period, the different consultations and meetings will be taking place.
- From May 2016, the “writers” will be reviewing all of the recommendations from all the different meetings and will work to develop a final set of the Principles.
- We expect the Principles to be presented in June 2016 at the main meeting of the WCC in Norway ( called “Central Committee”);
- Once we have the final Principles, our work is not over — actually, in some ways, it will just be starting!

### **What happens once the Principles are created?**

When the Principles are finalized, we will all have a list of things churches should do to support and respect children’s rights. But how will we ensure they are getting done?

During the meetings and consultations taking place through March and April 2016, we are asking churches, children, and adolescents how to best implement, monitor, and ensure the fulfilment of the promises found in the Principles.

### **Need more information?**

If you have more questions or if you are looking for more information, please contact the person who gave you this resource or, alternatively, contact Frederique Seidel ([Frederique.Seidel@wcc-coe.org](mailto:Frederique.Seidel@wcc-coe.org)) or Caterina Tino ([ctino@unicef.org](mailto:ctino@unicef.org)).

**The World Council of Churches:** is a group of 345 churches that are all working together to try to make a difference to situations in our world. It is also called the WCC.

**UNICEF:** is an organization that helps all children in the world to have food to eat, medicines to treat their illnesses, a good school to learn in, and a family that cares for them

**Child Friendly:** programs, policies, initiatives etc. designed for children, with their rights in mind.

**Community:** a group of people that know each other or live near each other (local community), or have other things in common such as interests or beliefs.

**Consultations:** asking people what they think; often in the form of a meeting or gathering of people.

**Convention:** conventions are legal agreements made by governments to protect girls, boys, women, men and also our planet. They highlight the promises governments have made on an issue (for example: to protect children and women’s rights) and they are part of international law.

**Monitoring:** checking to make sure something has been done.

**Ratify:** when a government “**ratifies**” a Convention it is saying that it agrees with it, and it becomes a legal duty for that country. In other words, by ratifying a Convention, a government is saying that it promises to do the things outlined in the Convention.

**Research:** careful study and investigation for the purpose of discovering and explaining new knowledge.



## ANNEX 2 – MINIMUM STANDARDS IN CHILDREN’S PARTICIPATION

### Basic Requirements for the Implementation of the Right of the Child to be Heard

The UN CRC Committee urges State parties to avoid tokenistic approaches that limit children’s expression of views, or that allow children to be heard but fail to give their views due weight. It emphasizes that adult manipulation of children, placing children in situations where they are told what they can say, or exposing children to risk of harm through participation are not ethical practices and cannot be understood as implementing Article 12.

If participation is to be effective and meaningful, it needs to be understood as a process, not as an individual one-off event. Experience since the Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted in 1989 has led to a broad consensus on the basic requirements that have to be reached for effective, ethical, and meaningful implementation of Article 12. The Committee recommends that State parties integrate these requirements into all legislative and other measures for the implementation of Article 12.

All processes in which a child or children are heard and participate must be:

- a) **Transparent and informative** – Children must be provided with full, accessible, diversity-sensitive and age-appropriate information about their right to express their views freely and their views to be given due weight, and how this participation will take place, its scope, purpose and potential impact.
- b) **Voluntary** – Children should never be coerced into expressing views against their wishes and they should be informed that they can cease involvement at any stage.
- c) **Respectful** – Children’s views have to be treated with respect and they should be provided with opportunities to initiate ideas and activities. Adults working with children should acknowledge, respect, and build on good examples of children’s participation, for instance, in their contributions to the family, school, culture, and the work environment. They also need an understanding of the socio-economic, environmental, and cultural context of children’s lives. Persons and organizations working for and with children should also respect children’s views with regard to participation in public events.
- d) **Relevant** – The issues on which children have the right to express their views must be of real relevance to their lives and enable them to draw on their knowledge, skills, and abilities. In addition, space needs to be created to enable children to highlight and address the issues they themselves identify as relevant and important.
- e) **Child-friendly** – Environments and working methods should be adapted to children’s capacities. Adequate time and resources should be made available to ensure that children are adequately prepared and have the confidence and opportunity to contribute their views. Consideration needs to be given to the fact that children will need differing levels of support and forms of involvement according to their age and evolving capacities.
- f) **Inclusive** – Participation must be inclusive, avoid existing patterns of discrimination, and encourage opportunities for marginalized children, including both girls and boys, to be involved (see also para. 88 above). Children are not a homogenous group and participation needs to provide for equality of opportunity for all, without discrimination on any grounds. Programmes also need to ensure that they are culturally sensitive to children from all communities.
- g) **Supported by training** – Adults need preparation, skills and support to facilitate children’s participation effectively, to provide them, for example, with skills in listening, working jointly with children and engaging children effectively in accordance with their evolving capacities.

Children themselves can be involved as trainers and facilitators on how to promote effective participation; they require capacity-building to strengthen their skills in, for example, effective participation awareness of their rights, and training in organizing meetings, raising funds, dealing with the media, public speaking and advocacy.

- h) **Safe and sensitive to risk** – In certain situations, expression of views may involve risks. Adults have a responsibility toward the children with whom they work and must take every precaution to minimize the risk to children of violence, exploitation, or any other negative consequence of their participation. Action necessary to provide appropriate protection will include the development of a clear child-protection strategy that recognizes the particular risks faced by some groups of children, and the extra barriers they face in obtaining help. Children must be aware of their right to be protected from harm and know where to go for help if needed. Investment in working with families and communities is important in order to build understanding of the value and implications of participation, and to minimize the risks to which children may otherwise be exposed.
- i) **Accountable** – A commitment to follow-up and evaluation is essential. For example, in any research or consultative process, children must be informed as to how their views have been interpreted and used and, where necessary, provided with the opportunity to challenge and influence the analysis of the findings. Children are also entitled to be provided with clear feedback on how their participation has influenced any outcomes. Wherever appropriate, children should be given the opportunity to participate in follow-up processes or activities. Monitoring and evaluation of children’s participation needs to be undertaken, where possible, with children themselves.

### **ANNEX 3 – SAMPLE OF INVITATION**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_ (children and adolescents),

Ever think about your rights?

Ever wonder how churches can make sure that you are safe from harm and can actively participate in your church, family, and community life? Ever wonder how churches can help make sure your rights are protected and promoted?

Right now, a lot of different churches, organizations (like the World Council of Churches and UNICEF), and people are asking these same questions. We would like to invite you to participate in a meeting to think and talk about these issues.

This meeting is being hosted by:

Participants will include:

Please attend and share your ideas and recommendations with us.

Meeting details

Location:

Date:

Time:

Other details:

Your recommendations will be shared with the World Council of Churches, UNICEF, and other churches participating in this initiative.

We look forward to seeing you soon.

For more information, please contact:

## ANNEX 4 – SAMPLE CONSENT FORM FOR PARENTS/GUARDIANS

### PARENT / LEGAL GUARDIAN’S CHILD CONSENT FORM

Dear Parent/Guardian,

Thank you for your interest in allowing your child to participate in the consultation on the draft “Principles for Child-friendly Churches.”

When your child participates in a consultation on the draft “Principles for Child-friendly Churches,” the church and facilitators of this process collect some basic information about your child and your family for administrative purposes. Because your privacy and your child’s privacy are important, we want to ask your permission to collect, keep, and use this information.

#### ***Why church and facilitators collect information?***

The church has been invited by the World Council of Churches (WCC) and UNICEF to ask young people about their views in an overall effort to strengthen churches’ engagement for and with children. Your privacy is important to us.

#### ***How will we use the information we collect?***

UNICEF and WCC will use the information provided by your child to inform the document “Principles for Child-friendly Churches,” so that the Principles better take children’s opinions into account and better respond to their needs

#### ***How will we make sure the information is used properly?***

Church and facilitators value your privacy and we want you to be assured that the information we collect from you and your children will be kept secure and will only be used for the purposes of this initiative. Church and facilitators will make sure that only authorized people can access the information. They will maintain reasonable safeguards to keep all the information secure and protected from loss or misuse. When information is transferred, it will be sent using generally accepted data security policies and practices.

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#### ***Consent Authorization***

I have read this document or the document was explained to me. I confirm that

1. I fully understand and give permission for my child listed below to participate in the consultation on the draft “Principles for Child-friendly Churches” through the \_\_\_\_\_ Church. The process of the consultation on the draft “Principles for Child-friendly Churches” has been explained to me, and I understand the potential benefits from and our responsibilities for his/her participation.
2. I give my consent to church and facilitators of the consultation on the draft “Principles for Child-friendly Churches” to collect and use my child’s information (including photographs and video documentation), as church and facilitators deem appropriate and necessary.
3. I further understand that as the parent or guardian I have the right to access, rectify, and erase the information collected on and from my child, or to object to its processing. I can exercise these rights by contacting my local church at the address \_\_\_\_\_.

4. I understand that if at any time I am not satisfied with the consultation process of the draft "Principles for Child-friendly Churches," I may withdraw my child from participation.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Child

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Parent or Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Relation to Child

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name of Parent or Guardian

\_\_\_\_\_  
Church Staff Member

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date



## ANNEX 5 - RAPPORTEUR CHECKLIST

### **Information collection**

We will appreciate if you can share the following information with us regarding your consultation with children/adolescents:

1. *Where and when did the discussion take place?*

Country:

City:

Location:

Date:

2. *Who is the facilitator?*

Name:

Position:

Age:

Organization:

Contact details (e-mail and phone):

3. *Who is participating?*

Number of children/youth participating:

Please detail the diversity of the group (check as many boxes as appropriate):

- children with disabilities
- minority ethnic group
- minority language
- orphaned or without appropriate parental care
- children living in institutional care
- children living below the national poverty line
- children displaced by natural disaster or conflict
- religious minorities
- children in exploitative forms of work (e.g., street children, children on the move, former child soldiers)
- other (please specify)

Number of boys:

Number of girls:

Ages of the participants:

Is there anything else you would like to share about the group (e.g., are they part of a group or organization)?

4. *Describe in brief the selection criteria for the consultation.*

5. *Describe how the facilitator was selected? Did he/she receive a copy of the "Minimum Standards in Children's Participation" (Annex 2)?*

Please do not share the names of the children and young people participating.

### **Checklist**

The following checklist has been developed to help convey key points that have been recorded.

<b>Feedback collected during preparatory activities</b>	
Participants' observations during activities about the CRC.	
Feedback received during activities on "What the church is/does/can do."	
<b>Feedback about the "Principles"</b>	
Did your consultation focus on one or a few of the Principles, or all of them? For each Principle taken into consideration, please answer the following questions:	
1. Did participants find that things are missing in the current draft?	
2. What did participants like about the Principle(s)?	
3. What did participants dislike about the Principle(s)?	
4. What changes to the current draft, if any, did participants suggest?	
Other issues raised by children and young people.	
<b>Feedback on the question on whether the Principles are useful</b>	
1. How can churches benefit if they support/sign the Principles? (The answer to this question may help us find ways to convince other churches to "sign on.")	
2. How can children benefit?	
3. How can families and communities benefit?	
<b>Participants' ideas for monitoring and follow-up</b>	
1. How can we know if churches are fulfilling their promises?	
2. What role can children and young people play in monitoring their promises?	
3. What role might the churches themselves have?	
4. What possible follow-up actions did the adolescents and young people suggest?	
5. What resources would the participants need to carry out the identified follow-up actions (e.g., advocacy materials; guides; reports; child-friendly resources, etc.)? Please be as specific as possible.	

## **ANNEX 6 - SAMPLE OF AGENDA**

### Day 1 (total estimated time: 4 hours, 15 minutes)

Step 4 (Welcome and Introduction) and Step 5 (Expectations and Agenda) → 1 hour

Step 6 – Children’s Rights Refresher → 1 hour

Break → 30 minutes

Step 7 – Defining the Church: What It Is, Does, and Can Do → 1 hour, 30 minutes

Step 8 – Introducing the Principles → 15 minutes

### Day 2 (total estimated time: 4 hours)

Step 9 – Discussing the Principles → 1 hour, 30 minutes

Break → 30 minutes

Step 10 – Making It Happen → 1 hour

Step 11 – Next Steps → 30 minutes

Step 12 – Evaluation and Team Wrap Up → 30 minutes

## **ANNEX 7 – ENERGIZERS AND ICEBREAKERS**

### String Conversation

- \* Cut string or yarn into pieces of different lengths.
- \* Each piece should have a matching piece of the same length.
- \* Make sure there are enough pieces for each participant to have one.
- \* Give each participant one piece of string, and ask them to find the person who has a string of the same length.
- \* After they find their matches, they should ask each other a few questions about themselves.
- \* After a few minutes, ask each participant to introduce their partner to the entire group

### Food for Thought

- \* Ask each participant to state his or her name and a favourite food that begins with the same first letter as the name. For example: "Hi, my name is Amira and I like Apples"
- \* As each participant introduces himself or herself, he or she must repeat the names and favourite foods of the person(s) who came before.
- \* It can be a challenge for the participants toward the end to remember everyone's names/foods. Encourage teamwork and remind participants it is all in good fun.

### Appreciations

- \*Ask participants to form a circle.
- \*Ask each person to say something they appreciate about the person standing on their right.
- \*Continue until everyone has spoken and everyone has received an "appreciation."

### Human Knot

- \*Form groups of approximately 10 people each.
- \*Ask participants to form a circle, shoulder-to-shoulder.
- \*Ask participants to each place their right hand in the middle of the circle and to grasp another hand.
- \*Then ask participants to put their left hand in the middle and grasp a different person's hand.
- \*Check to make sure that everyone is holding the hands of two different people and that they are not holding hands with someone directly next to them.
- \*Explain to participants that what you'd like them to do is untangle themselves, without letting go of hands, into a circle.
- \*Participants may change their grip, but they are not allowed to unclasp and re-clasp their hands.
- \*Stand back and see what happens. It can take some time before you see progress, but encourage participants to not give up and to keep looking for solutions.
- \*Provide support and encourage participants to talk to each other and try different things.
- \*When the group accomplishes their tasks, have everyone clap and celebrate. As a team you have overcome a "tangled" and confusing problem: by working together, you have found solutions!

More ideas for energizers and icebreakers can be found at:

<http://wilderdom.com/games/Icebreakers.html>

<http://www.mwls.co.uk/icebreakers/>

<http://www.excellerate.co.nz/freeicebreakers.html>

**ANNEX 8 - CHILD-FRIENDLY  
VERSION OF THE CRC<sup>1</sup>**

**Article 1**

Everyone under 18 has all these rights.

**Article 2**

You have the right to protection against discrimination. This means that nobody can treat you badly because of your color, sex or religion, if you speak another language, have a disability, or are rich or poor.

**Article 3**

All adults should always do what is best for you.

**Article 4**

You have the right to have your rights made a reality by the government.

**Article 5**

You have the right to be given guidance by your parents and family.

**Article 6**

You have the right to life.

**Article 7**

You have the right to have a name and a nationality.

**Article 8**

You have the right to an identity.

**Article 9**

You have the right to live with your parents, unless it is bad for you.

**Article 10**

If you and your parents are living in separate countries, you have the right to get back together and live in the same place.

**Article 11**

You should not be kidnapped.

**Article 12**

You have the right to an opinion and for it to be listened to and taken seriously.

**Article 13**

You have the right to find out things and say what you think through making art, speaking and writing, unless it breaks the rights of others.

**Article 14**

You have the right to think what you like and be whatever religion you want to be, with your parents' guidance.

**Article 15**

You have the right to be with friends and join or set up clubs, unless this breaks the rights of others.

**Article 16**

You have the right to a private life. For instance, you can keep a diary that other people are not allowed to see.

**Article 17**

You have the right to collect information from the media – radios, newspapers, television, etc. – from all around the world. You should also be protected from information that could harm you.

**Article 18**

You have the right to be brought up by your parents, if possible.

**Article 19**

You have the right to be protected from being hurt or badly treated.

**Article 20**

You have the right to special protection and help if you can't live with your parents.

**Article 21**

You have the right to have the best care for you if you are adopted or fostered or living in care.

**Article 22**

You have the right to special protection and help if you are a refugee. A refugee is someone who has had to leave their country because it is not safe for them to live there.

**Article 23**

If you have a disability, either mental or physical, you have the right to special care and education to help you develop and lead a full life.

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<sup>1</sup> Save the Children



**Article 24**

You have a right to the best health possible and to medical care and to information that will help you to stay well.

**Article 25**

You have the right to have your living arrangements checked regularly if you have to be looked after away from home.

**Article 26**

You have the right to help from the government if you are poor or in need.

**Article 27**

You have the right to a good enough standard of living. This means you should have food, clothes, and a place to live.

**Article 28**

You have the right to education.

**Article 29**

You have the right to education which tries to develop your personality and abilities as much as possible and encourages you to respect other people's rights and values and to respect the environment.

**Article 30**

If you come from a minority group because of your race, religion or language, you have the right to enjoy your own culture, practice your

own religion, and use your own language.

**Article 31**

You have the right to play and relax by doing things like sports, music, and drama.

**Article 32**

You have the right to protection from work that is bad for your health or education.

**Article 33**

You have the right to be protected from dangerous drugs.

**Article 34**

You have the right to be protected from sexual abuse.

**Article 35**

No-one is allowed to kidnap you or sell you.

**Article 36**

You have the right to protection from of any other kind of exploitation.

**Article 37**

You have the right not to be punished in a cruel or hurtful way.

**Article 38**

You have a right to protection in times of war. If you are under 15, you should never have to be in an army or take part in a battle.

**Article 39**

You have the right to receive help if you have been hurt, neglected, or badly treated.

**Article 40**

You have the right to receive help in defending yourself if you are accused of breaking the law.

**Article 41**

You have the right to any rights in laws in your country or internationally that give you better rights than these.

**Article 42**

All adults and children should know about this convention. You have a right to learn about your rights and adults should learn about them too.

This is a simplified version of the CRC. It has been signed by 191 countries. The convention has 54 articles in total. Articles 43 – 54 are about how governments and international organizations will work to give children their rights. The full text can be found here:

<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/pdf/crc.pdf>

## ANNEX 9 – CHILD-FRIENDLY VERSIONS OF THE PRINCIPLES

### A. The Draft “Principles for Child-Friendly Churches” Explained to 0 to 10-year-old Children

*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.<sup>2</sup>

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 cares 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, and then, very importantly, would encourage all the churches worldwide to use the ideas.

To help us to find out what makes a church welcoming, safe, and fun, or what we have to do to make it that way, we need to ask the most important people. And the most important people, of course, are you!

So we’ve invited you to this class because we really want to hear what you think.

We can share all our ideas with you, listen to what you have to say about them, hear your ideas, and find out if they can be made even better?

These are the ideas:

**1. 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.**

*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:

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<sup>2</sup> Methodology for pre-school age could include forms of storytelling such as “once upon a time.”

- ask all children, families, and caregivers what they need and would like before planning their 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;
- use creative ideas in church to discover the children's views, ideas, and worries;
- 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;
- consider the needs of any children with disabilities when planning all activities.

*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.

## **2. 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*

Churches should:

- have 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;
- 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*

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

- support parents and offer teaching on issues that affect children, such as bullying and abuse;
- help people understand that it is always wrong to hurt children just to make them do what you want.

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

Churches should 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.”<sup>3</sup> 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 people to understand how important this is to a child;
- keep records of children who are baptized.

**3. The church needs to look for ways to help all people understand the rights of children, and encourage people in charge of a village/city/country to act when the rights of children are not being taken seriously.**

Churches should always aim to focus on children’s needs when creating activities and help people to understand the rights of the child and the importance of this. Churches should:

- create ways to discover how children feel about issues that affect their lives and act on this;
- offer children the opportunity to express their views and concerns and to highlight their rights through working with the television, radio, and Internet.

**4. The church needs to organize activities with children to protect our planet.**

The lives of children will be affected by future climate change. Churches should:

- 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 and then include children in deciding on any changes that need to be made.

**B. The Draft “Principles for Child-Friendly Churches” Explained to 11- to 18-year-old Children and Adolescents**

*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<sup>4</sup> 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.

About a year ago, 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.

This is why we have invited you for this workshop. We are very happy that you are interested in telling us what you think about the principles, or how they could be improved.

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<sup>3</sup> Facilitators could bring a birth certificate to show what it is.

<sup>4</sup> Explain that this includes adolescents according to the CRC.

Here is a short overview of what has been proposed so far.

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

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

In particular, churches commit to:

- consulting children, adolescents, and their families or caregivers and considering their needs when developing church 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;
- using creative ideas in church to discover the children' and adolescent's views, ideas, and worries;
- 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;
- considering the needs of any child or adolescent with disabilities when planning all activities.

*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.

**2. 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*

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.

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

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 of violence and by supporting local and national institutions in charge of protecting them.

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)*

Churches should 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” – as this paper is needed for a person to get support if they are ill, to go to school, and to access many other “adolescents’ rights.”*

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.

**3. The church needs to help to make sure that everyone knows about the rights of children and adolescents, and to tell the people in charge of their village/city/country to act when the rights of children and adolescents are not properly respected.**

Churches commit to:

- consulting with children and adolescents when planning activities or taking decisions that affect their lives and listen to their opinion;
- talking to leaders to create laws and structures to make sure children and adolescents' rights are respected everywhere;
- working with schools and with media (television, radio, Internet) so that everybody can learn about the rights of children and adolescents.

**4. The church needs to organize projects with boys and girls in the church to help protect our planet and your future.**

Children and adolescents are those whose lives will be affected the most if our planet is not respected.

Churches should:

- convince families and members of their community to make sure they reduce waste and don't pollute;
- offer children and adolescents the chance to be involved in helping shape the future by being involved in activities and trainings and included in making decisions on any issues about protecting the environment;
- explore how eco-friendly they are and then include children and adolescents in deciding on any changes that need to be made.



## **ANNEX 10 - BIBLICAL REFLECTION ON CHILD RIGHTS (by Tiffany Tao and Ruthi Hoffman Hanchett)<sup>5</sup>**

This biblical reflection examines child rights from a Christian perspective, using the Exodus story of God's people in Egypt. In the following passages, many years had passed since the prosperous time of Joseph, and God's people were now being severely oppressed by the Egyptians. As you read, consider how God responds to the suffering of His people and what implications it may have on our view of child rights.

### **Part I Scripture and Discussion**

#### ***Exodus 1:8-14, 3:7-9***

*8 Now a new king arose over Egypt, who did not know Joseph. 9 He said to his people, 'Look, the Israelite people are more numerous and more powerful than we. 10 Come, let us deal shrewdly with them, or they will increase and, in the event of war, join our enemies and fight against us and escape from the land.' 11 Therefore they set taskmasters over them to oppress them with forced labour. They built supply cities, Pithom and Rameses, for Pharaoh. 12 But the more they were oppressed, the more they multiplied and spread, so that the Egyptians came to dread the Israelites. 13 The Egyptians became ruthless in imposing tasks on the Israelites, 14 and made their lives bitter with hard service in mortar and brick and in every kind of field labour. They were ruthless in all the tasks that they imposed on them...*

*7 Then the Lord said, "I have observed the misery of my people who are in Egypt; I have heard their cry on account of their taskmasters. Indeed, I know their sufferings, 8 and I have come down to deliver them from the Egyptians, and to bring them up out of that land to a good and broad land, a land flowing with milk and honey..."*

Discussion questions:

1. What human abuses or injustices do you observe in this passage?
2. What kind of abuses or injustices do you observe in your own context or countries that specifically affect children?
3. What is the Lord's response to the suffering of His people? Why do you think He responds this way?

### **Part II Scripture and Discussion**

Now, read these next few passages on how the Lord ensures the protection of the most vulnerable after the Israelites were delivered from the hands of the Egyptians.

#### ***Exodus 22:21-23***

*21 You shall not wrong or oppress a resident alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt. 22 You shall not abuse any widow or orphan. 23 If you do abuse them, when they cry out to me, I will surely heed their cry;*

#### ***Leviticus 19:9-10***

*9 When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not reap to the very edges of your field, or gather the gleanings of your harvest. 10 You shall not strip your vineyard bare, or gather the fallen grapes of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the alien: I am the Lord your God.*

#### ***Deuteronomy 10:17-19***

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<sup>5</sup> This resource has been developed by World Vision International

*17 For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who is not partial and takes no bribe, 18 who executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and who loves the strangers, providing them with food and clothing. 19 You shall also love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.*

Discussion questions:

1. What relationship is there between God's nature and the responsibility of God's people in favour of the most vulnerable?
2. What policies does God prescribe to guarantee that the rights of the most vulnerable are upheld among His people the Israelites?
4. What implications do these passages have for children today—especially for the most vulnerable children?
5. How do you think God is responding to the suffering of the most vulnerable today?

### **Reflection**

Although humanity has only progressively grown into an awareness of the rights of children, God has always bestowed an inherent dignity upon children throughout history. This is evident in creation (Gen. 1:27), in which humans are the only beings who are created in God's image. The value of humankind is affirmed by Jesus' birth as a child and His death and resurrection on the cross for the salvation of all people. From this perspective, the rights and dignity of children are not only human, but also divine. These rights are not something that are to be demanded, but are graciously given, enacted and protected by God. Therefore, upholding child rights is deeply spiritual. Violating them is not only a legal but also a divine offense.

In the Old Testament, the Lord upheld the dignity and rights of the most vulnerable in ancient Israelite society by setting forth guidelines for the treatment of orphans, widows, aliens and the poor. Today, we have similar guidelines and tools to protect the dignity of vulnerable children, such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The CRC encompasses what the Bible already states about God's special concern for children and sets standards for child protection. As Christians, we have a fuller sense of the value that God lavishes on children, but we can use the CRC as a tool to reflect and enact our biblical understanding of God's love to a secular world.

The passages above not only tell us how God responded when the rights and dignity of His people were exploited back in the Old Testament, but are an example of how God continues to work for the full realization of child rights even today. The Lord still has great compassion on vulnerable children, continues to use His people today to rescue those under oppression, and provides us with tools (like the CRC) to ensure that the most vulnerable are not forgotten. As followers of Christ, we are invited and allowed to participate in God's action in the world concerning the rights of all children. We serve a God who is actively engaged in child rights and uses us as His instruments to intervene on behalf of the oppressed and destitute children around the world. As we strive to loose the bonds of injustice, to set the oppressed free, and to share our food and homes with the poor and hungry (Is. 58), we should consider child rights advocacy and programming as an expression of our partnership with a compassionate and gracious God.

### **Prayer for Children**

Let us remember the children in the world whose rights to dignity, justice, peace, and fullness of life are not yet a reality – and pray for them.

Ever compassionate Lord, be gracious to us and hear our prayer:

We pray today for the suffering children in our midst and those we do not see.

We know that your eyes see their tears,  
that your heart knows their sorrow,  
that your hands can reach them now.

We remember that Jesus was once a child,  
that poverty stole his bread,  
that tyrants sought his life,  
that his mother tasted tears.  
We ask you to send friends for the lonely,  
food for the hungry,  
medicine for the sick,  
saviours for the enslaved,  
rescue for the perishing.  
Give us the wisdom to do our part,  
share our possessions,  
leave our comforts,  
lend them our voice,  
send them our food,  
love them with more than prayers.  
We call on you in the name of your child Jesus.  
Amen.

(Adapted from a prayer by Tony Kummer, [www.ministry-to-children.com](http://www.ministry-to-children.com))