

# African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child

In 1990, the African Union wrote the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) to add protection for the rights of children. A “right” is something that every child has. One child’s rights cannot take away from another person’s rights. When a child is young, adults must help make decisions for the child. Adults must think about what is best for the child, not just what the child or adult wants. As a child grows older, she or he has more responsibilities and will be able to make more decisions about his or her rights.

A child is a person younger than 18 years old. Every child has these rights, no matter what they look like, where they live, which religion or tribe they belong to, whether they are a boy or girl, or who their parents are and what they do.



## Children’s Rights

Children have a right to...

- live and grow up. Children cannot be killed even if they commit a crime.
- a name and a country.
- say what they think as long as they are not hurting anyone.
- gather in groups as long as they are peaceful groups.
- believe in a religion that they choose. Parents must help children learn values and right and wrong.
- privacy.
- education in order to develop their talents. This education should include good African morals and traditions. Children should be taught how to get along with other people from different cultures or tribes, how to take care of the environment, and how to be healthy.
- return to school after giving birth.
- play and make art.
- special help so that they can participate in the community and be able to receive an education when they have a disability.
- medical help and clean water so that they stay healthy.
- safe working conditions. Children cannot be abused when they work. They cannot do work that harms them or prevents them from going to school or growing in mind and body. Children cannot work as beggars or be sold by anyone including parents.
- be proven guilty of a crime. Children, who have committed crimes, may not be tortured or housed with adult criminals.
- live with their parents unless it is dangerous. If a child is not living with his or her parents, she or he may spend time with his or her parents. Children cannot live in prison just because their mother is imprisoned.
- safe, caring, family-like homes until the children can be reunited with their families.

## Children’s Responsibilities

Children have responsibilities to society. They must show respect to elders, help unify and strengthen Africa, and work for peace using their talents.

## Adults’ & Governments’ Responsibilities

This law is more important than all customs and traditions that go against this law. Adults must do what is best for the child when making a decision. They should ask for the child’s opinion. Parents are responsible to care for their children. Parents and the government must care for the child’s needs as they grow up. Discipline cannot be harmful to the child.

Adults and governments must protect children from...

- abuse or torture.
- traditional practices that hurt children, such as child marriage.
- war. Children cannot be soldiers or work in war.
- unfair treatment.
- sexual abuse.
- harmful drug use and the drug trade.

Governments must protect children who have left their homes as refugees.

Governments and organizations must carefully plan children’s adoptions to make sure that the children will be safe and loved in their new families.

