
UNIT 1 GLOBAL INITIATIVES AND UN SAFEGUARDS FOR CHILDREN

Structure

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1.0 OBJECTIVES

The aim of this unit is to introduce you to global initiatives and UN safeguards for children. These international commitments have played a significant role in enhancing the status of children. After studying this unit, you should be able to:

- discuss international declarations, conventions and covenants that focus on child rights;
- discuss child-related development goals comprising the Education For All (EFA) and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs); and
- describe the role of agencies like UNICEF, ICDC in advocating rights of children.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The state of children is an index of a nation's level of development. Child rights are an integral part of human rights. A safe and secure childhood with provision for education, adequate nutrition and health are integral for survival, protection and development of children. Every child irrespective of caste, class, birth, race or gender should have access to these entitlements. Children also need to participate in decisions that affect their lives. However, the report on 'The State of the World's Children 2008' shows that every day on an average more than 26,000 children under the age of five years die around the world mostly from preventable causes. Recognizing the situation of children, various initiatives have been taken to better their lives.

1.2 INTERNATIONAL COMMITMENTS

Many international commitments emphasize the importance of the rights of children for their overall development. In this section, we will discuss the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child 1924, Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948, Declaration of the Rights of the Child 1959, Convention Against Discrimination in Education 1960, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1966, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights 1966, Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against

Women (CEDAW) 1979, Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) 1989 and World Summit for Children 1990, Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of Worst Forms of Child Labour 1999, and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006.

Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child 1924

This is the first international initiative for children's rights. The League of Nations had instituted this declaration that states 'mankind owes to the Child the best that it has to give'. Irrespective of the differences of race, nationality or creed, the following should be made available to children:

- The child must be given the means requisite for its normal development, both materially and spiritually;
- The child that is hungry must be fed; the child that is sick must be nursed; the child that is backward must be helped; the delinquent child must be reclaimed; and the orphan and the waif must be sheltered and succored;
- The child must be the first to receive relief in times of distress;
- The child must be put in a position to earn a livelihood, and must be protected against every form of exploitation;
- The child must be brought up in the consciousness that its talents must be devoted to the service of fellow men.

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights 1948

This is a significant document that contains the rights we are entitled to. According to Article 1 'all human beings are born free and equal in dignity and rights'. This declaration is relevant for children also. Two Articles that refer to them specifically are Article 25 (2) and Article 26. Article 25(2) states that 'motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance. All children born, whether in or out of wedlock, shall enjoy the same protection. Article 26 states that, (1) Everyone has the right to education. Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory. Technical and professional education shall be made generally available and higher education shall be equally accessible to all on the basis of merit. (2) Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace. (3) Parents have a prior right to choose the kind of education that shall be given to their children.

Declaration of the Rights of the Child 1959

The Preamble states that the United Nations Charter and Universal Declaration of Human Rights are the guiding principles. They proclaim that the fundamental rights of human persons are crucial for social progress and everybody should have these rights irrespective of any distinction. It also states that governments should formulate legislative and other measures in adopting the principles listed here. Principle 2 states that a child is entitled to 'special protection' so as 'to enable him to develop physically, mentally, morally, spiritually and socially in a healthy and normal manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity'. This will be done giving 'the best interests of the child...paramount consideration'. According to the declaration, the child is entitled to 'a name and a nationality' (Principle 3), 'to the benefits of social security' and 'to adequate nutrition, housing, recreation and medical services' (Principle 4). The declaration also heeds to children who are physically, mentally or socially handicapped' (read challenged) (Principle 5) and 'to children without a

family and to those without adequate means of support' (Principle 6). Principle 7 entitles children to free and compulsory education at least till the elementary level and includes their right to play and recreation. Unlike the Geneva declaration, it states that the 'the child shall in all circumstances be *among the first* to receive protection and relief' (Principle 8). Principle 9 is important in opposing child trafficking, child labour and other such practices. It observes that 'a child shall be protected against all forms of neglect, cruelty and exploitation' and 'shall not be admitted to employment before an appropriate minimum age; in no case be caused or permitted to engage in any occupation or employment which would prejudice his health or education, or interfere with his physical, mental or moral development'. Finally, Principle 10 holds significance in promoting a secular, composite, multi-cultural environment for the development of a child's personality. According to this, a 'child shall be protected from practices which may foster racial, religious and any other form of discrimination' and 'be brought up in a spirit of understanding, tolerance, friendship among peoples, peace and universal brotherhood, and in full consciousness that his energy and talents should be devoted to the service of his fellow men'.

Convention against Discrimination in Education 1960

This convention advocates for free and compulsory primary education and highlights the need to make secondary and higher education accessible. The governments shall formulate and develop a national policy to promote equality of opportunity and treatment. There should be no discrimination in access or quality of education.

International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights 1966

This Covenant has implications for child rights. Article 10 (1) states that family is 'the natural and fundamental group unit of society' and 'the widest possible protection and assistance should be accorded to the family' since it is responsible for the care and education of dependent children. (2) Special protection should be accorded to mothers during a reasonable period before and after childbirth. During such period working mothers should be accorded paid leave or leave with adequate social security benefits. (3) Special measures of protection and assistance should be taken on behalf of all children and young persons without any discrimination for reasons of parentage or other conditions. Children and young persons should be protected from economic and social exploitation. Their employment in work harmful to their morals or health or dangerous to life or likely to hamper their normal development should be punishable by law. States should also set age limits below which the paid employment of child labour should be prohibited and punishable by law. Article 12 [2(a)] observes that the State should ensure provision for the reduction of the stillbirth-rate and of infant mortality and for the healthy development of the child. According to Article 13(1) the States should recognize the right of everyone to education. Education directed to the full development of the human personality and the sense of its dignity, shall strengthen the respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. Education shall enable all persons to participate effectively in a free society, promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations and all racial, ethnic or religious groups, and further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace.

International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights 1966

This Covenant complements the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Bajpai 2003). There are references to children in certain Articles and some specific children-centred Articles. Some of these include Article 10 [2(b)], accused juvenile persons shall be separated from adults and brought as speedily as possible for adjudication and accorded treatment appropriate to their age and legal status; Article 14(1) provides an exception to the right of hearing in public when it is in the interest of the juvenile or where it concerns the guardianship of children;

Article 14 (4) In the case of juvenile persons, the procedure shall be such as will take account of their age and the desirability of promoting their rehabilitation; Article 18 (4) The States Parties to the present Covenant undertake to have respect for the liberty of parents and, when applicable, legal guardians to ensure the religious and moral education of their children in conformity with their own convictions; Article 23 (1) The family is the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and the State; Article 24 (1) Every child shall have, without any discrimination as to race, colour, sex, language, religion, national or social origin, property or birth, the right to such measures of protection as are required by his status as a minor, on the part of his family, society and the State; (2) Every child shall be registered immediately after birth and shall have a name; (3) Every child has the right to acquire a nationality.

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) 1979

This Convention is referred to as ‘women’s bill of rights’. With reference to children, it has a few Articles. Article 5 (b) observes that States should ‘ensure that family education includes a proper understanding of maternity as a social function and the recognition of the common responsibility of men and women in the upbringing and development of their children, it being understood that the interest of the children is the primordial consideration in all cases’. It affirms women’s rights to acquire, change or retain their nationality and the nationality of their children (Article 9). Article 16 (d) states that in all matters concerning marriage and family relations ‘the interests of the children shall be paramount’.

Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) 1989

This convention is a comprehensive set of children’s rights. There are four general principles enshrined in the Convention. These are meant to help with the interpretation of the Convention as a whole and thereby guide national programmes of implementation. The four principles are formulated, in particular, in Articles 2, 3, 6 and 12.

- **Non-discrimination (Article 2):** State parties must ensure that all children within their jurisdiction enjoy their rights. No child should suffer discrimination. This applies to every child, “irrespective of the child’s or his or her parent’s or legal guardian’s race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or other status”. The essential message is equality of opportunity. Girls should be given the same opportunities as boys. Refugee children, children of foreign origin, children of indigenous or minority groups should have the same rights as all others. Children with disabilities should be given the same opportunity to enjoy an adequate standard of living.
- **Best interests of the child (Article 3):** When the authorities of a State take decisions which affect children, the best interests of children must be a primary consideration. This principle relates to decisions by courts of law, administrative authorities, legislative bodies and both public and private social welfare institutions.
- **The right to life, survival and development (Article 6):** The right-to-life Article includes formulations about the right to survival and to development, which should be ensured “to the maximum extent possible”. The term “development” in this context should be interpreted in a broad sense, adding a qualitative dimension: not only physical health is intended, but also mental, emotional, cognitive, social and cultural development.
- **The views of the child (Article 12):** Children should be free to have opinions in all matters affecting them, and those views should be given due weight “in

accordance with the age and maturity of the child". The underlying idea is that children have the right to be heard and to have their views taken seriously, including in any judicial or administrative proceedings affecting them.

The provisions of the Convention have been grouped under different sections according to Fact sheet No 10 (Rev.1) on 'the Rights of the Child'. Equal importance has been attached to all the rights recognized by the convention:

- **General Measures of Implementation** are in Articles 4, 42 and 44 of the CRC. For this States have to harmonize national law and policy with the provisions of the Convention, plan mechanisms to coordinate policies for children monitoring the implementation of the Convention. States have to ensure that provisions of the convention are known to the public at large that is both adults and children.
- **Definition of the Child:** Article 1 states that a child means every human being below the age of eighteen years.
- **General Principles** include Non-discrimination (Article 2); Best interests of the child (Article 3); the right to life, survival and development (Article 6); and respect for the views of the child (Article 12).
- **Civil Rights and Freedoms** include the right to a name and nationality (Article 7); preservation of identity (Article 8); freedom of expression (Article 13); access to appropriate information (Article 17); freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Article 14); freedom of association and of peaceful assembly (Article 15); protection of privacy (Article 16); the right not to be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment (Article 37 (a)).
- **Family Environment and Alternative Care** includes Parental guidance (Article 5); parental responsibilities (Article 18, paras. 1 and 2); separation from parents (Article 9); family reunification (Article 10); recovery of maintenance for the child (Article 27, para. 4); children deprived of a family environment (Article 20); adoption (Article 21); illicit transfer of children abroad (Article 11); abuse and neglect (Article 19), including physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration (Article 39); periodic review of treatment provided to children (Article 25).
- **Basic Health and Welfare** comprises survival and development (Article 6, para. 2); disabled children (Article 23); health and health services (Article 24); social security and child care services and facilities (Article 26 and Article 18, para. 3); standard of living (Article 27, paras. 1-3).
- **Education, Leisure and Cultural Activities** include right of the child to education, also higher education and vocational training and guidance (Article 28); aims of education (Article 29); right of the child to rest and leisure and to enable the child to participate fully in cultural and artistic life (Article 31).
- **Special Protection Measures** focus on children in situations of emergency including refugee children (Article 22); children in armed conflicts (Article 38), and ensure their physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration (Article 39); children in conflict with the law which comprises the administration of juvenile justice (Article 40); children deprived of their liberty, facing any form of detention, imprisonment or placement in custodial settings (Article 37 (b), (c) and (d)); the sentencing of juveniles, in particular the prohibition of capital punishment and life imprisonment (Article 37 (a)); children in situations of exploitation, economic exploitation, including child labour (Article 32); drug abuse (Article 33); sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (Article 34); other forms of exploitation (Article 36); sale, trafficking

and abduction (Article 35); children belonging to a minority or an indigenous group (Article 30).

The United Nations General Assembly in 2000 adopted two Optional Protocols to the Convention to safeguard children from involvement in armed conflicts and from sexual exploitation. The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict states that members of armed forces who have not attained the age of 18 years do not take a direct part in hostilities (Article 1) and should not be compulsorily recruited into armed forces (Article 2).

The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography prohibits such serious violation of children's rights (Article 1). Article 2 states that 'sale of children' means any act or transaction whereby a child is transferred by any person or group of persons to another for remuneration or any other consideration; 'child prostitution' means the use of a child in sexual activities for remuneration or any other form of consideration; 'child pornography' means any representation, by whatever means, of a child engaged in real or simulated explicit sexual activities or any representation of the sexual parts of a child for primarily sexual purposes. The protocol emphasizes the significance of international cooperation and public awareness in combating these heinous crimes.

World Summit for Children 1990

This summit was held on 29-30 September 1990 at the United Nations where it adopted a Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of Children and a Plan of Action for implementing the Declaration in the 1990s. This declaration was committed to ensure a better future for children and asked governments to ratify and implement the CRC (1989). Recognizing the challenges of extreme poverty, armed conflict, apartheid, among others that impede children's growth and development, it decided to improve the state of the world's children. This declaration highlights that political will, national action and international cooperation are important for ensuring children's rights. The Plan of Action for implementing this declaration emphasizes specific actions in the areas of health and nutrition, education and literacy, maternal health etc. for the well-being of children.

Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of Worst Forms of Child Labour 1999

This International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention was adopted on June 17, 1999. It defines the 'worst forms of child labour' (Article 3) as: all forms of slavery or practices similar to slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage and serfdom and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict; the use, procuring or offering of a child for prostitution, for the production of pornography or for pornographic performances; the use, procuring or offering of a child for illicit activities, in particular for the production and trafficking of drugs as defined in the relevant international treaties; and work which, by its nature or the circumstances in which it is carried out, is likely to harm the health, safety or morals of children. The Convention also recognizes 'the importance of education in eliminating child labour' (Article 7). The ratifying states are required to design and implement programmes to eliminate the worst forms of child labour.

Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2006

The aim of this convention is to ensure human rights and fundamental freedoms to people with disabilities. The ratifying States should ensure that children with disabilities are not excluded from free and compulsory primary education, or from

secondary education, on the basis of disability. Also, persons with disabilities can access an inclusive, quality and free primary education and secondary education on an equal basis with others in the communities in which they live.

Check Your Progress I

Note: Use the space provided for your answer.

- 1) Discuss in brief the provisions of the Convention of the Rights of the Child with its optional Protocols.

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1.3 DEVELOPMENT GOALS FOR CHILDREN

The development goals for children discussed in the Education For All framework and the Millennium Development Goals highlight the current concerns with regard to child rights in various fields and determine the future course of action in achieving them.

Education for All: From the Jomtien Declaration to the Dakar Framework

The World Declaration on Education for All was adopted in March 1990 at the Conference on Education for All in Jomtien, Thailand. The Declaration stated that ‘everybody has a right to education’. Taking an account of the problems faced by the developing countries since the 1980s, it declared the need to fulfill the basic learning needs of every citizen in every society. The term ‘Education for All (EFA)’ means reflection on the nature and purpose of education in each society and that education be based on the actual needs of children, youth and adults, especially the excluded sections, also promoting culture and empowering citizens. It is much more than expansion of the existing formal school system to foster economic growth through the spread of basic cognitive skills. However, the assessment of EFA suggested that even after many international conferences held following Jomtien, it was not being prioritized. In the countries of sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, Arab States, in the least developed countries and those in conflict or going through reconstruction, the state of education was worrisome. In April 2000, the World Education Forum in Dakar reaffirmed the Jomtien perspective on EFA and adopted a Framework of Action to fulfill the commitments made since 1990 and achieve the goal of Education for All within a generation and sustain it thereafter (UNESCO 2008).

EFA Goals and Strategies

There are three important features of the Dakar Framework of Action, according to UNESCO (2008). The first is the set of six goals to be achieved by all countries by 2015 (see Box 1.1). Part of Goal 5-eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005- was to be achieved within five years. It was a challenging goal to be set. Yet it shows the commitment to gender equality in education.

Box 1.1: The Dakar EFA goals

Paragraph 7 of the Dakar Framework of Action defines the EFA goals the governments, organizations, agencies, groups and associations represented at the World Education Forum pledged themselves to achieve:

- 1) Expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children;
- 2) Ensuring that by 2015 all children, particularly girls, children in difficult circumstances and those belonging to ethnic minorities, have access to and complete free and compulsory primary education of good quality;
- 3) Ensuring that the learning needs of all young people and adults are met through equitable access to appropriate learning and life skills programmes;
- 4) Achieving a 50 per cent improvement in levels of adult literacy by 2015, especially for women, and equitable access to basic and continuing education for all adults;
- 5) Eliminating gender disparities in primary and secondary education by 2005, and achieving gender equality in education by 2015, with a focus on ensuring girls' full and equal access to and achievement in basic education of good quality;
- 6) Improving all aspects of the quality of education and ensuring excellence of all so that recognized and measurable learning outcomes are achieved by all, especially in literacy, numeracy and essential life skills.

Source: UNESCO (2008): 15

The Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) approved by world leaders at the United Nations Millennium Summit in 2000 and reaffirmed at the UN World Summit in 2005, state an agenda to improve human lives. Two of these reiterate EFA Goals 2 and 5:

MDG 2: Achieve universal primary education (Target: Ensure that by 2015 children everywhere, boys and girls, will be able to complete a full course of good quality primary schooling.)

MDG 5: Promote gender equality and empower women. (Target: Eliminate gender disparity in primary and secondary education, preferably by 2005, and at all levels of education no later than 2015).

The second feature of the Dakar Framework for Action is a set of twelve strategies to be pursued by all the participants in the World Education Forum (see Box 1.2). The governments have to implement national plan of action for EFA, by integrating it in poverty-reduction and development programmes, along with civil society. The third feature of the Dakar Framework constitutes the pledge to alter budget priorities to achieve these goals.

Box 1.2: The Dakar EFA strategies

Paragraph 8 of the Dakar Framework list to twelve strategies:

- 1) mobilize strong national and international political commitment for education for all, develop national action plans and enhance significantly investment in basic education;
- 2) promote EFA policies within a sustainable and well-integrated sector framework clearly linked to poverty elimination and development strategies;
- 3) ensure the engagement and participation of civil society in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of strategies for educational development;
- 4) develop responsive, participatory and accountable systems of educational governance and management;

- 5) meet the needs of education systems affected by conflict, national calamities and instability and conduct educational programmes in ways that promote mutual understanding, peace and tolerance, and help to prevent violence and conflict;
- 6) implement integrated strategies for gender equality in education which recognize the need for changes in attitudes, values and practices;
- 7) implement as a matter of urgency education programmes and actions to combat the HIV/AIDS pandemic;
- 8) create safe, healthy, inclusive and equitably resourced educational environments conducive to excellence in learning with clearly defined levels of achievement for all;
- 9) enhance the status, morale and professionalism of teachers;
- 10) harness new information and communication technologies to help achieve EFA goals;
- 11) systematically monitor progress towards EFA goals and strategies at the national, regional and international levels; and
- 12) build on existing mechanisms to accelerate progress towards education for all.

Source: UNESCO (2008): 15

Millennium Development Goals

As discussed earlier, these goals are important for child survival and development. Goal 1 to eradicate extreme poverty and hunger is important in alleviating child malnutrition. According to the MDG Report 2008, the proportion of children under five who are undernourished declined from 33 per cent in 1990 to 26 per cent in 2006. However, by 2006, the number of children in developing countries who were underweight still exceeded 140 million. Undernourishment among children of this age shows the extent of hunger in the population as a whole. Goal 2 to achieve universal primary education marks some progress, due to political will and investment in primary education, with an increase in enrollment. The number of children of primary school age who were out of school fell from 103 million in 1999 to 73 million in 2006, despite an overall increase in the number of children in this age group. Goal 3 seeks to promote gender equality and empower women for which various countries as part of enrolment drives are encouraging girls' education. Girls' primary enrollment increased more than boys' in all developing regions between 2000 and 2006. As a result, two out of three countries have achieved gender parity at the primary level. Despite impressive gains, girls account for 55 per cent of the out-of-school population.

Goal 4 is to reduce child mortality. According to the report 'the State of the World's Children 2008' on 'Child Survival' this goal aims to reduce the global under-five mortality rate by two thirds between 1990 and 2015. Reaching the target means reducing the number of child deaths from 9.7 million in 2006 to around 4 million by 2015. The MDGs 2008 report states that a child born in a developing country is over 13 times more likely to die within the first five years of life than a child born in an industrialized country. Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for about half the deaths of children under-five in the developing world. Between 1990 and 2006, about 27 countries – the large majority in sub-Saharan Africa - made no progress in reducing childhood deaths. The next goal, to reduce maternal mortality is a challenge. Maternal mortality remains unacceptably high across much of the developing world. In 2005, more than 500,000 women died during pregnancy, childbirth or in the six weeks after delivery. Ninety-nine per cent of these deaths occurred in the developing regions. At the global level, maternal mortality decreased by less than 1 per cent per year between 1990 and 2005 - far below the 5.5 per

cent annual improvement needed to reach the target. Ante-natal care is being promoted for the well-being of the expectant mother and her offspring.

Goal 6 is to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases. By the end of 2007, specific national plans of action for children orphaned by AIDS and other vulnerable children had been developed by 24 countries, including 21 in sub-Saharan Africa. To ensure environmental sustainability is goal 7 and it advocates the inclusion of the principle of sustainable development in the policies and programmes. Lack of sanitation and drinking water facilities adversely impact human lives. Since 1990, the number of people in developing regions using improved sanitation facilities has increased by 1.1 billion, with significant improvements in South-Eastern and Eastern Asia. Nevertheless, in order to meet the target, the number of people using improved sanitation facilities must increase by about 1.6 billion in the next seven years. Though access to water has improved; yet nearly one billion have to do without it. Moreover, MDG 8 'to develop a global partnership for development' also targets special needs of the least developed countries. This is to be done through 'more generous official development assistance for countries committed to poverty reduction'. In order to accomplish reduction in child mortality, it will require accelerated action on multiple fronts: reducing poverty and hunger (MDG 1), improving maternal health (MDG 5), combating HIV and AIDS, malaria and other major diseases (MDG 6), increasing the usage of improved water and sanitation (MDG 7) and providing affordable essential drugs on a sustainable basis (MDG 8). A re-examination of strategies to reach the poorest, most marginalized communities is also needed.

Check Your Progress II

Note: Use the space provided for your answer.

- 1) 'Right to education is important for a child's development'. Comment stating reasons.

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- 2) Summarize the progress on child-related Millennium Development Goals.

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1.4 GLOBAL AGENCIES

Various global agencies such as United Nations Children's Fund, International Child Development Centre and Children's Rights Information Network emphasize the rights of children so that they become a part of policy and planning. We will discuss, in brief, the role and functions of these agencies that strive to improve children's lives.

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

UNICEF, created by the United Nations in 1946, was formerly known as United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund. It came into existence to provide aid to children in countries, particularly in Europe and Asia, ravaged by the Second World War. In 1953, this agency became United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) with the aim of improving the state of the world's children. UNICEF advocates for the protection of children's rights, helps meet their basic needs and expands opportunities for them to reach their full potential. It is guided by the Convention on the Rights of the Child and strives to establish children's rights as enduring ethical principles and international standards of behaviour towards children.

UNICEF insists that the survival, protection and development of children are universal development imperatives that are integral to human progress. It mobilizes political will and material resources to help countries, particularly developing countries, ensure a "first call for children" and to build their capacity to form appropriate policies and deliver services for children and their families. UNICEF is committed to ensuring special protection for the most disadvantaged children - victims of war, disasters, extreme poverty, all forms of violence and exploitation and those with disabilities. It responds in emergencies to protect the rights of children. In coordination with United Nations partners and humanitarian agencies, UNICEF makes its unique facilities for rapid response available to its partners to relieve the suffering of children. In everything it does, the most disadvantaged children and the countries in greatest need have priority.

UNICEF aims to promote the equal rights of women and girls and to support their full participation in the political, social, and economic development of their communities. UNICEF works towards the attainment of the sustainable human development goals adopted by the world community and the realization of the vision of peace and social progress enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations. UNICEF was created to overcome the obstacles that poverty, violence, disease and discrimination place in a child's path. Advocating measures to give children the best start in life, it believes that proper care at the youngest age forms the strongest foundation for a person's future.

International Child Development Centre (ICDC)

ICDC or the UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre in Florence, Italy, was established in 1988 to strengthen the research capability of the United Nations Children's Fund and to support its advocacy for children worldwide. The Centre helps to identify and research current and future areas of UNICEF's work. Its prime objectives are to improve international understanding of issues relating to children's rights and to help facilitate the full implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child in developing and industrialized countries.

Children's Rights Information Network (CRIN)

CRIN is a global network coordinating and promoting information and action on child rights. It strives to make it a global agenda by addressing root causes and promoting systematic change. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) is its guiding framework. CRIN's activities are based on the belief that information is a powerful tool for realizing children's rights. It distributes news, events and reports, lobbies, enables advocacy and promotes knowledge sharing and coordination. CRIN participates in international child rights coalitions and advocacy groups, supports campaigns and makes the UN and regional mechanisms more accessible to those lobbying for social change. The network is supported, and receives funding from Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA), Save the Children Sweden, UNICEF, Save the Children UK, among others.

Check Your Progress III

Note: Use the space provided for your answer.

1) What is the role of UNICEF and ICDC in promoting child rights?

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1.5 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have discussed the international declarations, conventions and covenants advocating rights of children. Their ratification binds member States to introduce policies and programmes for children and ensure their implementation. Beginning from 1952 the Geneva Declaration to the Convention related to Persons with Disabilities 2006, various efforts are being made to ensure a safe childhood for children so that they can develop their maximum potential. The Education for All and the Millennium Development Goals establish the importance of education, adequate nutrition and health, water and sanitation etc. for children. Finally, agencies like UNICEF, ICDC and CRIN highlight child rights as a global issue.

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