

the 1990s, the number of people in the world who are under 15 years of age has increased by 1.2 billion, from 1.1 billion in 1980 to 2.3 billion in 1999 (United Nations 2000).

There is a growing awareness that the needs of children are different from those of adults, and that children have the right to be heard in decisions that affect them. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) states that children have the right to be heard in decisions that affect them, and that their views should be given due weight in proportion to their age and maturity.

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