# Child Rights

According to international law, a child means every human being below the age of 18 years. This is a universally accepted definition of a child and comes from the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

In India, marriage of a girl below the age of 18 years and a boy below 21 years is restrained under the child marriage Restraint Act 1929. Moreover, after ratifying the UNCRC in 1992, India changed its law on juvenile justice to ensure that every person below the age of 18 years, who is in need of care and protection, is entitled to receive it from the State. All children below 18 years need to be protected from abuse and exploitation.

Children need special attention, love, care and safety. Children are more vulnerable than adults to the conditions under which they live. They are more affected than any other age group by the actions of government and society. Most of the children are guided by adults. They need guidance of caretakers to make proper decisions. Basically they have their own interest and attitude towards their life. They need not to be forced by any others to do things.

All children under the age of 18 are entitled to the standards and rights guaranteed by the laws that govern our country and the international legal instruments we have accepted by ratifying them.

The Constitution of India guarantees all children certain rights, which have been specially included for them. These include:

* Right to free and compulsory elementary education for all children in the 6-14 year age group(Article 21A)
* Right to be protected from any hazardous employment till the age of 14 years(Article 24)
* Right to be protected from being abused and forced by economic necessity to enter occupations unsuited to their age or strength (Article 39(e)).
* Right to equal opportunities and facilities to develop in a healthy manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity and guaranteed protection of childhood and youth against exploitation and against moral and material abandonment(Article 39(f))
* Right to equality(Article 14)
* Right against discrimination(Article15)
* Right to personal liberty and due process of law(Article21)
* Right to be protected from being trafficked and forced into bonded labour(Article 23)
* Right of weaker section of the people to be protected from social injustice and all forms of exploitation(Article46)
* The State must make special provisions for women and children(Article 15(3))
* Protect interest of minorities (Article29)
* Promote educational interest of weaker section of people(Article 46)
* Raise the level of nutrition and standard of living of its people and improvement of public health(Article 47)



V.Umamaheswari

Head – Department of Social Work

National Anti-Crime and Human Rights Council of India