Summary of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Article 1  Definition of a child
A child is every human being below the age of 18 years:
You!

Article 2  Non-discrimination
The rights listed in the Convention apply to all children, without any discrimination. This means that it does not matter what your (or your parent's or legal guardian's) race, color, religion, language or nationality is. Equally, it does not matter where you are born, whether you have a disability or not, what you think or say, and whether you are a boy or girl. Every child should be treated fairly and equally.

Article 3  Best interests of the child
Your best interests should be the top priority in all decisions made that may affect you.

Article 4  Implementation of the Convention
Governments have the responsibility to take all measures that are available to them to ensure that every child can enjoy all the rights listed in the Convention. When a government has ratified the Convention, this means they need to do what is in their power to realize children's rights. In total, 193 governments ratified the Convention.

Article 5  Parental guidance
Governments are responsible to respect and support families in their responsibilities, rights and duties to guide their children to exercise and enjoy their rights. Parents should avoid pushing children to make choices with consequences they cannot (yet) fully oversee.

Article 6  Life, survival and development
You have the right to life. Governments must do as much as they can to ensure the survival and development of all children.

Article 7  Birth registration, name and nationality
All children have the right to be registered. As soon as you are born, you are entitled to have a name and a nationality (to belong to a country). All children also have the right to know who their parents are and, as far as possible, to be cared for by them.

Article 8  Preservation of identity
Governments should respect your right to a name, nationality and family relations. Your right to an identity means that who you are should be officially recorded.

Article 9  Separation from parents
You have the right to live with your parents, unless it is not good for you. Children whose parents are not living together have the right to keep in contact with both on a regular basis, unless it may hurt the child.

Article 10  Family reunification
When family members live in different countries, they should be allowed to enter or leave those countries to ensure parents and children can be together as a family, or stay in contact.

Article 11  Non-return of children abroad
Governments must take all measures to prevent children from being taken from their countries illegally (kidnapping).

Article 12  Respect for the views of the child
You have the right to be heard. When adults make a decision that affects you, you have the right to share your opinion. Your opinion then needs to be taken into account.

Article 13  Freedom of expression
As a child, you have the right to seek, receive and share information in any way you please, by speaking, writing, through arts, or any other media. Children have the freedom to express themselves as long as they respect the rights, freedoms and reputations of others.

Article 14  Freedom of thought, conscience and religion
You have the right to think and believe what you want and you can practice any religion you choose, as long as you do not withhold others from doing the same. Your parents are expected to support you.

Article 15  Freedom of association
Children have the right to meet, to join groups and organizations, as long as you respect other in the enjoyment of their rights.
Article 16 Right to privacy
You have the right to privacy. You should be protected by law against attacks on your way of life, family, honor and reputation.

Article 17 Access to information and the media
Children should have access to (inter)national information sources. Governments should encourage mass media to spread information that you can understand, in support of your health and well-being. Governments should protect you from harmful information or materials. Also, they should encourage mass media to consider the language of minority groups or indigenous children.

Article 18 Parental responsibilities
Both your parents have common responsibilities for your upbringing and development. Your best interests should be of their main concern. Governments should support parents to take care of their children. For instance, they should take measures to ensure that children with working parents can benefit from child-care services and institutions.

Article 19 Protection from violence
Children have the right to be protected from all forms of physical or mental violence, from being hurt or abused, neglected or treated carelessly, from maltreatment or exploitation, including sexual abuse. Governments should take all appropriate measures to prevent violence against children and to include effective procedures to offer support to children and caregivers. Governments should also take measures for the identification, reporting, referral, investigation, treatment and follow-up of cases of violence against children.

Article 20 Children deprived of family environment
If for whatever reason your family cannot take care of you, you have the right to special protection and assistance by the government. Alternative care needs to be ensured, giving special attention to your ethnicity, religion, culture and language.

Article 21 Adoption
A child’s best interests must be top priority in cases of adoption and when they are in foster care. An adopted child has the right to proper care and protection, both when the adoption takes place within country boundaries and when he or she is taken to live abroad.

Article 22 Child refugees
Refugee children have the right to receive protection and help, and to enjoy the rights of this Convention, like all other children.

Article 23 Children with disabilities
If you live with a disability you have the right to special care and assistance. You have the right to enjoy a full and independent life, in an environment where your dignity is respected, your self-reliance is promoted and you can actively participate in your community.

Article 24 Health and health services
You have the right to health. You have the right to access the best health care services possible. This includes the provision of nutritious foods and clean drinking-water.

Article 25 Review of treatment in care
If you are being looked after by local authorities instead of your parents, you have the right to periodic reviews of your living arrangements, to assess that they are appropriate and in your best interest.

Article 26 Social security
You have the right to get support from the government when in need, taking into account your circumstances and those of your parents and/or legal guardians.

Article 27 Adequate standard of living
You have the right to an adequate standard of living for your physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development. Governments should help families in need, in particular, regarding nutrition, clothing and housing.

Article 28 Education
You have the right to education. Primary education should be compulsory and available and free to all. Governments should make higher education accessible to all and take measures to encourage children to regularly attend school and reduce the rate of drop-outs.
Article 29  Aims of education
Education should be focused on the development of your personality, talents, and abilities. Education should encourage you to respect your parents, cultural identity, language, and value the national values of your country of residence. Education should also prepare you to lead a responsible life in society in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality between men and women, and friendship, without discrimination.

Article 30  Children of minorities or indigenous groups
Minority or indigenous children cannot be deprived of their right to enjoy, learn and practice their own culture, religion and language.

Article 31  Rest and play
You have the right to rest and play, and to participate in recreational activities appropriate to your age. You also have the right to participate fully in cultural life and the arts.

Article 32  Child labor
The government should protect you from economic exploitation and from performing any work that can be dangerous, interferes with your education, or is harmful to your health or physical, mental, spiritual, moral or social development.

Article 33  Drugs
Governments must take all appropriate measures to protect you from using harmful drugs, and to prevent the use of children in drug trade.

Article 34  Sexual exploitation
Governments must protect children from all forms of sexual exploitation and sexual abuse. This article is complemented with the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

Article 35  Abduction, sale and traffic of children
Governments must take all measures to prevent the abduction of, the sale of or the traffic in children for any purpose or in any form. This article is complemented with the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

Article 36  Other forms of exploitation
Governments must protect you against all other forms of exploitation that could harm your welfare and development.

Article 37  Detention and punishment
Nobody is allowed to torture or treat or punish a child in a cruel, inhumane or degrading way. Children cannot be sentenced to death or life of imprisonment without the possibility of release. No child can be arrested or imprisoned in an unlawful or arbitrary way. If you are arrested, in detention or imprisoned, you must be treated with humanity and respect, taking into account your needs according to your age. Children should not be put in the same cell with adults unless it is best for the child. Children should be able to maintain contact with their family.

Article 38  War and armed conflicts
Governments must protect children affected by war. Children under the age of 15 should not be forced or recruited to take part in a war or join the armed forces. This article is complemented by the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflicts.

Article 39  Recovery of child victims
Governments must promote physical, psychological and social reintegration of a child victim. A child victim is any child who suffered from any form of neglect, exploitation or abuse, torture, or any other form of cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment, or armed conflicts. Such recovery must be in an environment that protects the health, self-respect and dignity of the child.

Article 40  Juvenile justice
If you are accused of, or recognized as having broken criminal law, you have the right to legal help and fair treatment in a justice system that respects your rights. Governments should establish a minimum age below which children cannot be held responsible to breaking criminal law. Governments should provide the minimal legal safeguards for a fair trial or alternative proceedings.

Article 41  Respect for higher standards
The rights enlisted in this Convention cannot affect other national or international provisions, which provide better rights of the child.

Article 42  Knowledge of rights
Governments must make the principles and provisions of the Convention widely known to children and adults alike.

Articles 43-54  Implementation of the Convention
These articles deal with how governments and other organizations, like KidsRights, should collaborate for the realization of children’s rights.
GUIDING PRINCIPLES:
Several articles in the Convention are considered to be guiding principles. They are general requirements for all rights to be realized. In other words, you always need to take these 4 articles into account when considering any of the rights listed in the Convention.

- Article 2 on non-discrimination
- Article 3 on the best interests of the child
- Article 6 on the right to life and development
- Article 12 on the right to be heard

OPTIONAL PROTOCOLS
Optional Protocols are treaties on their own. They complement the Convention. They are optional; governments may choose to ratify them or not.

- **Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict** (entered into force 12 February 2002)
  This Optional Protocol strengthens the Convention to increase the protection of children during armed conflicts. For instance, according to the Convention, the minimum age at which a person may be voluntarily recruited into or enlist in the armed forces is 15, but in the Protocol it is set at 18 years old.

  This Optional Protocol supplements the Convention (Articles 34 and 35) by providing governments with specific requirements on how to end sexual exploitation, abuse of children, and to protect children from being sold for non-sexual purposes, including forced labor and illegal adoptions.

- **Optional Protocol on a Communications Procedure**
  (Entered into force on 14 April 2014).
  This Optional Protocol provides an international complaints procedure for children's rights violations. Thanks to the protocol, children may bring complaints about violations to their rights directly before the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, if they cannot find a solution at a national level.

COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD