

Celebrating 25 years of rights for children

The Convention on the Rights of the Child reaches its 25th

year, it has generated substantive progress while at the same time staggering numbers of children are still affected by humanitarian crises, or otherwise victims of violence, exploitation and discrimination. Terre des hommes considers that renewed efforts are needed by all stakeholders to ensure full respect of children's rights.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child has reached its 25th year. This legal instrument has transformed the life of millions of children including the role they undertake within societies. The Convention offers a vision of the world where all children survive and develop to their full potential without discrimination, and are protected, respected and encouraged to participate in decisions affecting their lives in ways that take into consideration their best interests. It is one of the most complete human rights instrument linking civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. It has the biggest international support of any human rights treaty, having been ratified to date by 194 countries and it has therefore become a near universal reference. The Convention on the Rights of the Child entered into force in 1989 at a time of historical changes marking the end of a bipolar world and the emergence of renewed concepts of human rights.

Terre des Hommes fully adheres to the vision enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and reaffirms its full commitment to the implementation of this instrument which forms the foundation on which it has built its work. Terre des Hommes stands for the principles of the rights of children, as enshrined in the Convention, that all children are true subjects of human rights, actors in their own development, and not mere passive rights-holders, irrespective of the context in which they live.

A reality of ups and downs

Looking back at 25 years of work for and with children reminds us that great progress has been achieved since the adoption of the Convention; however there is still a long way to go. Major progress has been achieved for example regarding child mortality, education and children living in extreme poverty. The Convention has also inspired changes in laws and practice and transformed the way children are able to take an active role in their own lives and participate in the development of their communities. At the same time there is still a staggering number of children affected by humanitarian crisis, or otherwise victims of violence, exploitation and discrimination. The spirit of the Convention is that all children are entitled to human rights protection as well as additional protection depending on their age and development. Terre des Hommes implements this principle through 850 programmes in 65 countries. These programmes are rooted in a human rights based approach, meaning that all children are entitled to their rights and governments and societies will be held accountable. This is a continuity throughout the history of Terre des Hommes as justice and equality were already at the heart of its creation in 1960.

An instrument to address new issues

The world is changing at a pace never attained before and as we enter the next 25 years of the CRC, innovative ideas and methods of interventions will need to be devised to achieve realisation of all rights for all children. New challenges have emerged regarding children's rights which were not as

pressing concerns at the time of the adoption of the Convention, and yet, the principles enshrined in the Convention remain the dominating instrument enabling to address these challenges for children in an equitable and ethical way. Terre des Hommes is looking ahead, for example with its “Destination Unknown Campaign” to protect children on the move, its “Sweetie Campaign” to combat cyber-exploitation of children, its ChildrenWIN programme for the protection of children in mega sporting events and its work to promote the rights of the child in a context of environmental degradations including climate change. The right of children to express their views and opinions guide the work of Terre des Hommes as well as the changes we advocate for.

Building prosperous societies

Implementing the Convention is not only an obligation towards children but also the foundation of sustainable and prosperous societies. When children do not develop their full potential, it is not only them but their society as a whole which will suffer the consequences. Investing in children is therefore critical to eradicating poverty, boosting shared prosperity, and creating a brighter future. In an increasingly complex and interlinked world, Terre des Hommes appeals to all forces involved in the realisation of the rights of children to establish channels of cooperation among them. Accountability for children’s rights lies with governments, but we all have a common responsibility to uphold and protect those rights – as families and guardians, civil society, community organizations, media, educators, and the private sector.

On this 20th of November 2014, we have much to celebrate today, and even more to realise tomorrow, but only together will we achieve the progress which were promised to children 25 years ago.