



HEAR OUR VOICES

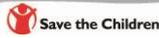


Save the Children

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

HEAR OUR VOICES WE ENTREAT
NEW ZEALAND'S CHILD PARTICIPATION REPORT TO THE UNITED NATIONS
COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD, 2010.

HEAR OUR VOICES



*Limited Rights? Limited Knowledge?
We have rights to things we don't know about.
Because of the limited knowledge of our rights, we have less opportunity for now and the future.
It's there, but it's like something in-between and you can't get it.
We need to be told about our rights.
What are our rights? We should have the right to know what rights we have.
(Focus group - Digital Story)*

Background

The New Zealand government ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), also known as the Convention in 1993. Every five years, the government reports to the UN on progress made for New Zealand children. *Hear our voices we entreat* presents the child and youth perspective on their well being in Aotearoa/New Zealand and sits alongside the NGO report continuing the legacy of *Whakarongo Mai/ Listen Up*, the 10 minute video report produced by Action for Children and Youth Aotearoa (ACYA) to facilitate children's voices to the in 2003.

This children and young people's report was commissioned by Save the Children New Zealand to make sure that as citizens, children and young people participate in the UNCRC reporting process and are consulted on matters of importance them. Save the Children New Zealand is a non-political and non-sectarian development organization that works to inspire breakthroughs in the way the world treats children and young people, and to achieve immediate and lasting change in their lives.

Save the Children New Zealand together with UNICEF, ACYA, Office of the Children's Commissioner, the Human Rights Commission and YouthLaw make up an Advisory Group that advises the New Zealand government on matters related to the Convention. The consultations with children and young people were supported by the UNCRC Advisory Group and relevant government departments.

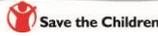
Process and findings

The report was named *Hear our voices, we entreat*¹ by the children and young people based on the third line of the New Zealand national anthem because of the children's desire to be recognised and respected as equal citizens. The report comes from a series of focus groups held with 199 young people throughout Aotearoa/ New Zealand from May 2009 to April 2010. Children and young people given the time, resources and opportunity to tell their rights story and engage with United Nations Committee on the Rights on the Child (CRC) and policy makers using the creative medium of digital storytelling. This report reflects the voices of the children and their editorial input - it is their report.

The young people said while there are many good things about Aotearoa/New Zealand, there are several issues that must be improved upon in relation to the rights of the child. The following points reflect the 'what's hot' and 'what's not' brainstorming that took place with the groups. The ideas were then developed into a digital story about the participants experiences growing up in New Zealand.

¹ *God Defend New Zealand*. New Zealand's National Anthem, <http://www.mch.govt.nz/anthem/>.

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What's hot (good) about children's and young people's rights in Aotearoa/New Zealand? The children and young people said we have;

- Families, schools and community groups that care about young people.
- Health care for children and young people.
- Good food.
- Opportunities to learn and be educated.
- Great things to do outdoors in our green environment.
- Lots of fun things that we can do with our friends and families.

Children and young people also said 'we are nuclear-free and protected from war'.

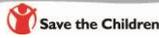
What needs to be addressed and improved upon? Aotearoa/New Zealand needs:

- Greater awareness of the Convention.
- To treat Māori people and their opinions with respect; especially when it comes to their rights as tangata whenua (the indigenous people of Aotearoa/New Zealand).
- To respond to climate change.
- To act on the discrimination of Māori and Pacific young people, young mothers, young people with mental illness and GLBT youth.
- To make sure that young mothers can access public transport without discrimination.
- To act on the effects of drug and alcohol addiction on adults and children.
- To listen to and include the opinions of children and young people in local and national government.
- To make sure that our schools meet the needs of all students.
- To include sexuality education in schools.
- To make sure the New Zealand Police have a good relationship with the young people they work with.
- To protect the rights of young people in the workplace.

Aotearoa/ New Zealand has;

- A problem with gangs that are contributing to crime and abuse in the home. Young people are joining gangs for safety and are becoming victims of gang life.
- A problem with bullying – particularly of specific groups like refugee and migrant young people.

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- A problem with child abuse. It is not just a statistic that features in death notices in newspapers but a reality that many of the young story tellers knew and experienced.
- To deal with domestic violence affecting the lives of many children and young people.

Recommendations

Given the key findings of the consultations, the following recommendations were made by the young storytellers. Aotearoa/New Zealand needs to;

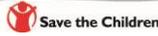
1. Teach New Zealanders about the Convention.
2. Respect the rights of, and listen to the opinions of Māori people, leaders and activists.
3. Include young people in discussions about climate change.
4. Address bullying by teaching acceptance of everyone despite their differences.
5. Make sure that everyone can access public transport in the cities and towns.
6. Look at the connections between gangs, drugs, alcohol and child abuse and implement programmes that can address the effects of gang culture on young people.
7. Give young people a better voice in national and local Government and include and listen to their opinions.
8. Ensure that the education system meets the needs of different groups of young people particularly if alternative schools and activity centres are closing.
9. Talk to children and young people when making changes to education.
10. Teaching about diversity and sexuality in New Zealand schools.
11. Celebrate families.
12. Address the effects of domestic violence on children.
13. Investigate the relationship between front-line police and young people and focus on encouraging police to prevent young people from becoming criminals.
14. Ensure that young people in the workplace have rights and are protected from discrimination.

Conclusions

Save the Children New Zealand is taking up the wero or challenge laid down by the children and young people in this report by:

- Continuing its advocacy role. In collaboration with the UNCRC Advisory Group and key children's rights organizations Save the Children New Zealand will engage with government on the issues raised and the recommendations made the by children and young people.
- Launching the report at Parliament.
- Disseminating the findings through our website and linking the report and digital stories to relevant websites.

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- Providing downloadable material such as:
 - the Literature Review;
 - Executive summary and full report of *Hear our voices we entreat*.
 - An educational resource for teachers, students and NGOs to promote the awareness on the Convention.
 - The digital stories are also available for local and international viewing on YouTube.
- In one of the digital stories the children said “*Our country, our problem, our solution*”. Save the Children New Zealand will partner with children and young people towards realisation of the recommendations made in this report. The digital stories will be used as indicators of gaps for New Zealand children and will be used to stimulate child led solutions through the Save the Children leadership and community service programme.

In the spirit of Eglantyne Jebb the founder of Save the Children and the originator of what is now known as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, let us rise to the challenge to,

“claim certain rights for children... for their universal recognition”

(Eglantyne Jebb, 1923).

A DVD with the digital stories created by children and young people is included with the executive summary. Please take the time to view *Hear our Voices* – sample stories:

- Watch on DVD or click this link to view *Treat People Nicely*.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BTNqIVSsQ14>
- Watch on DVD or click this link to view *Young Mums in New Zealand*.
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=krID_BI_IBo
- Watch on DVD or click this link to view *Discrimination Against People with Mental Illness*.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sZM-uRFhOLc>
- Watch on DVD or click this link to view *Our Country, Our Problem, Our Solution*.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zgsSQY4snsk>

You are encouraged to read the full report to see how young people not only view the pleasant and the sad in their lives but propose solutions to some of the challenges they face.

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