

History of the Rights of the Child

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19th century: children must be protected

The 19th century marked the start of children's rights. The child began to be considered as a being in need of protection. For the first time in Europe, laws were passed governing child labour. Different legal texts progressively encouraged or made education obligatory for young children, and society recognized the fact that the child could not be dealt with in the same way as an adult.

20th century : children become subjects of rights

The history of children's rights accelerated in the 20th century. In 1919, the League of Nations created a committee for the protection of children. Five years later, it adopted [the Geneva Declaration](#), first international treaty on children's rights, inspired by the work of Janusz Korczak, who is considered to be the father of children's rights.

After the Second World War, the history of children's rights underwent several key stages following the creation of the United Nations :

- 1948: Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which stipulates that « motherhood and childhood are entitled to special care and assistance ». BICE was created in this same year.
- 1959: The UN adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, which recognized the child as a subject of rights. From this date, BICE began its appeal for a text which went

further and was legally binding on the States.

- 1979: International Year of the Child, organized on the initiative of BICE. The Year of the Child marked the growing application of children's rights in many countries.
- 1979-1989: A group of NGOs piloted by BICE and DCI (Defence for Children International) contributed to preparatory work for the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- 1989: On November 20, [the Convention on the Rights of the Child \(CRC\)](#) was unanimously adopted by the United Nations General Assembly.

21st century : towards an effective application of children's rights?

- 2000: Strengthening of the CRC with the adoption of two optional protocols on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, and child involvement in armed conflicts.
- 2011: Adoption of a third optional protocol, introducing a mechanism by which children may submit complaints to the Committee on the Rights of the Child.
- 2014: The 25th anniversary of the Convention. It has now been ratified by 193 member states of the United Nations. Only the United States and Somalia, who have both signed the treaty, have not ratified it.

Since 1991, the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child has monitored the implementation of the CRC. BICE and other NGOs play an active role in this task.

[Discover our actions with the Committee on the Rights of the Child.](#)

Children's rights in the Catholic church

The teachings of the church attach great importance to the child and [his basic rights](#). [Paragraph 244 of the Compendium of the Social Doctrine of the Church](#) calls for the protection of his dignity : "In the family, which is a community of persons, special attention must be devoted to the children by developing a profound esteem for their personal dignity, and a great respect and generous concern for their rights. This is true for every child, but it becomes all the more urgent the smaller the child is and the more it is in need of everything, when it is sick, suffering or handicapped".

The Catholic church also stipulates that "The rights of children must be legally protected within juridical systems. In the first place, it is necessary that the social value of childhood be publicly recognized in all countries. No country on earth, no political system can think of its own future otherwise than through the image of these new generations."