



Focus: Children as Partners in ADC

We are the children of the world, and despite our different backgrounds, we share a common reality. We are united by our struggle to make the world a better place for all. We are not the sources of problems; we are the resources that are needed to solve them. You call us the future, but we are also the present.

Children's message from the Children's Forum at the 2002 World Child Summit in New York

Introduction

In recent years, many basic international declarations and conventions have been adopted that address and promote the needs and rights of children. Of particular relevance for development cooperation are the Millennium Development Goals adopted in 2000 (MDGs) as well as the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) from 1989. Many children, however, still live under harsh conditions: According to the UN Millennium Development Goals Report in 2010, about a quarter of all children under five in developing countries are still undernourished, despite progress in some regions. The report also emphasises that primary school education is still inaccessible in many areas, particularly for girls. In addition, children are exploited as cheap labour or abused by sex tourists. Most are also denied basic rights, such as involvement in decision-making processes.

Accounting for and promoting the needs and rights of children therefore remains a pressing issue in the international community in general and calls for broad engagement by many actors. Support for children also plays a major role in development cooperation in particular. One concern is to strike a balance between the need to protect children and foster their self-reliance. We must also address the specific needs of children by promoting relevant rights in particular. Ultimately, the prime concern is *treating children with the equality, respect and dignity to which they are entitled, not because they are the adults of tomorrow, but because they are human beings today* (Child Rights Information Network – CRIN).

The rights of children within Austrian Development Cooperation and Cooperation with Eastern Europe (ADC)

Poverty reduction, safeguarding peace and environmental protection are the three main goals of Austrian Development Cooperation (ADC). As laid down in the Federal Development Cooperation Act, promoting human rights is both a means and major prerequisite for ensuring peace, but it is also of major importance for achieving the other two goals. These areas also affect children, who in poor countries often constitute the largest section of the population. The Development Cooperation Act and the Three-Year Programme on Austrian Development Policy stipulate that, in

all its activities, the needs and rights of children must be taken into consideration. Accordingly also in the ADC guidelines (on human rights, safeguarding peace and conflict prevention) and in the Human Rights Manual corresponding intervention areas and interfaces are specified for implementation measures. ADC adopts a children's rights based approach at two levels:

- Assistance is provided for projects and programmes that are specifically geared to strengthening the rights of children and take account of their needs.
- Consideration is paid to the needs and rights of children in all activities (mainstreaming), including policy dialogue.

Five principles of ADC

- **Partners and participation:** Children are to be taken seriously as partners and stakeholders of ADC and their expertise valued. They are to be incorporated into ADC activities as participants and co-designers.
- **Target group:** "Children" are not a homogenous social group and measures should therefore take appropriate account of age, development and other factors of the concrete target group.
- **Analysis:** The collection of child-sensitive information, its analysis and assessment of the consequences shall form part of each programme and project development, implementation and evaluation.
- **Mainstreaming:** The consistent consideration of the rights and needs of children is a cross-cutting task for ADC as a whole and requires continuous awareness raising and training.
- **Children's rights:** ADC supports the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and other child-specific agreements, such as the ILO core labour standards.

The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Adopted in 1989, the United Nations **Convention on the Rights of the Child** (CRC) and its protocols on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and on the involvement of children in armed conflict (both in 2000) are the central reference documents under international law on which ADC's work is based. At its core is the recognition of children as independent recipients of fundamental human rights. CRC, the two protocols and the work of the UN Children's Rights Committee as the responsible supervisory organ establish standards for a number of topics, such as access to education, children's right to freedom of expression, banning violence, health and HIV/AIDS, adoption and placement in a home, jurisdiction over juveniles, protection of child refugees and children in armed conflicts, the sale of children and sexual exploitation. Accounting for the goals of the Convention and its protocols, the Austrian Action Plan against Human Trafficking was drafted under the leadership of the Federal Ministry of European and International affairs (FMEIA). Also in the fight against the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, it provides for protecting the rights and catering for the specific needs of children as a major goal.

Based on the right of every human being to respect for their dignity, the CRC builds on **four fundamental principles of children's rights**:

- **Right of the child to life:** Every child has the right to life/survival and development.
- **Prohibition of discrimination against children:** Every child is entitled to the same protection of his/her rights, without being discriminated on account of sex, origin, opinions, religion, disability, parents' status etc.
- **Principle of child welfare:** Every measure which affects a child directly or indirectly must be fundamentally oriented to "the best interests of the child", i.e. the interests of the child must be taken into account in decision-making processes.
- **Right of the child to participation:** Every child has the right to participate and to be adequately and actively involved in matters which affect it.

Standards and their implementation

Within just a few years, almost all the world's countries (193 states to date, with the notable exception of the USA) have contractually pledged themselves to the standards established by the CRC and their implementation. CRC was ratified in 1992 in Austria, where it is accorded the constitutional status as of January 2011. However, in view of continuing child poverty, child labour, sexual exploitation, domestic violence and the employment of "child soldiers" etc., the Convention can also be regarded worldwide as the most ignored of all human rights agreements. All too often, in this **discrepancy between entitlement and reality** an ambivalent attitude exists by societies towards children, and despite statements about "children as the future of society", young people's dependency and need for protection (the CRC defines "children" as being below the age of 18) are unscrupulously abused and exploited by some adults.

There can be no doubt that the **implementation** of the CRC constitutes an extensive task for all countries which seek to guarantee the freedom and participation rights of young people, as well as their entitlement to basic provisions and protection against violence, exploitation and discrimination. To fulfil this mandate, political will and the relevant resources are needed, whereby the CRC consistently underlines the necessity for **(development) cooperation**. Where necessary, international (development) cooperation must provide particular support to ensuring respect for the economic, social and cultural rights of children. In addition, the provisions on the right to education explicitly cite taking particular account of the needs of developing countries.

The complementary role of development cooperation in implementing CRC is based on the awareness that hardly any country has adequate means at its disposal to immediately guarantee all rights at the same time. Of decisive importance therefore are the programme, the **priorities**, and the course a policy takes in contributing to the realisation of children's rights. In the end, these commitments confront development work with the challenge either of supporting a specific programme or of rejecting it as discriminately for children and young people.

Participation, empowerment, accountability and monitoring

Children's rights are human rights and the concepts of participation, **empowerment** and **accountability** therefore play a central role also for children and young people.

Directly involving children and youth (**participation**) probably poses the greatest challenge for practical implementation. It means respecting them as experienced, competent, indispensable experts when it comes to their own concerns – children who have taken care of their brothers and sisters during civil wars, ex-child soldiers, street vendors, for example. When analysing situations, setting priorities and implementing and evaluating projects, development cooperation should take active account of their experience. All this, of course must comply with a certain quality standard for the participation of children (voluntariness, realistic aims, transparency, adequate access to information, etc.). Success stories, self-organized children's unions against the exploitation of child labour, for example, or participatory urban development processes (child-friendly districts) in Vietnam, show what this approach can do.

The children's and human rights based approach aims at strengthening or empowering rights bearers (**empowerment**) and at the responsibilities of duty bearers and/or the means of calling them to account (**accountability**). Practically, this means helping children to develop and grasp opportunities and supporting them in claiming their rights. This can be done, for example, by imparting knowledge about children's rights in school or by strengthening social skills and abilities for resolving conflicts. At the same time, parents/responsible persons/the State should respect and guarantee these rights, above all by providing the necessary conditions. These include,

for example, care for child refugees and for child HIV/AIDS victims, including access for children with disabilities to education, or public campaigns on ways to prevent violence and enforce the rights of victims, such as the establishment of child ombudspersons.

Monitoring plays an important role, in other words the supervision of progress and direction, and the fulfilling of standards of children's rights through independent institutions and non-governmental organisations. The relevant prerequisites are created through sensitisation, **raising awareness** and the training and further training of children and young people (through information on children's rights, educational goals in schools, etc), as well as of parents, teachers, social workers, security forces, politicians and other adult decision-makers.

Children's rights and EU development cooperation

Children and armed conflict/DDR programmes (disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration), violence against children, child trafficking, child labour and children and HIV/AIDS have long played a major role as issues in EU external policy and development cooperation. In July 2006, the European Commission launched a process for framing a comprehensive EU children's rights strategy. It emphasised the need to ensure that "all internal and external EU policies respect children's rights in accordance with the principles of EU law, and that they are fully compatible with the principles and provisions of the UNCRC and other international instruments."

Although the EU Strategy on the Rights of the Child has still not been adopted, a number of policy documents have been issued that, while not legally binding, provide guidance for EU external affairs and development cooperation. These include the EU Guidelines on Promotion and Protection of the Rights of the Child and the Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict or the EU Council Conclusions on Children in Development and Humanitarian Settings. The Conclusions also place emphasis on the need for the EU to support specific projects for promoting and integrating children's rights in all activities (mainstreaming). Policy dialogue also plays a major role in promoting children's rights. The Council Conclusions on Child Labour adopted in 2010 also draws attention to the special preventive role of development cooperation. It recommends, for example, encouraging developing countries to plan and implement national action plans against child labour.

Selected projects

Moldova: Better medical care and education for child cancer patients

In Moldova, the Institute of Oncology in the capital Chisinau is the only hospital for cancer patients. Forty of the 500 beds are reserved for children. For lack of facilities and experience/knowledge in the requisite pedagogical learning and therapy methods, too little account is taken of their special needs, such as extra school tuition during their hospital stay. The teachers are insufficiently qualified and no guidelines are available for effective lessons. Nor is there an adequate awareness of the need for psychological care and related psychosocial support.

Thanks to a project by HOPE'87 cofinanced by ADC, child cancer patients at the Institute of Oncology will in future receive educational and psychological support. An initial study will ascertain the educational needs. Educational and medical staff will be recruited and trained for adequate child care and a special training unit established for this. The requisite rooms for training will also be renovated and fitted out along with sanitary facilities. In addition, medical staff will be provided with the necessary know-how for setting up a unit for bone-marrow

transplantation. Besides enabling educational and psychological support for child cancer patients during their long stay in hospital, the measures will also improve labour-market prospects for personnel. In addition, they will make a major contribution to implementing the rights to health and education. (HOPE for the Children of Moldova – Support to the Institute of Oncology in Chisinau, Moldova/Project no. 8204-00/2010, 01.08.2010-31.07.2012, € 450,000)

Albania: Safety nets against child trafficking

Albania has placed children and youth protection high up on its policy agenda. Little progress has, however, been made in implementing current legislation, policy strategies and action plans. Local public institutions and an efficient multisectoral approach are lacking. With Austrian support, child protection centres have been established in nine social welfare offices and training is carried out in modern social work. Public institutions, such as schools, police and courts are being made aware of the issue. This is a way to take children and youth at risk off the streets and get them to attend school. The target group and their parents are trained in the various aspects of abuse, exploitation and human trafficking to be able to identify and prevent these early on. The activities contribute to implementing the National Strategy for Children and the Action Plan for 2005-2010. They are implemented by the non-governmental organisation (NGO) Terre des Hommes. (Developing a Child Protection Safety Net in Albania TdH Foundation (Project no.: 8265-00/2009; 01.10.2009 - 30.04.2012; € 620,000)

Serbia: Guarding children against cyber crime

Human trafficking is a dirty business and Serbia is also struggling with this issue. It has many faces: smuggler gangs, illegal immigration, prostitution, violence against women and children, etc. Especially dangerous for children is the link between child trafficking and cyber crime, as confirmed in a study by the NGO, Astra, in 2005/2006. It cites frequent cyber harassment, suspicious online offers with the intention of child trafficking, sexual abuse and pornography. Children and Internet providers are unaware of the problem and there are no adequate legal regulations.

With Austrian support, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) is engaged in cooperation with the Serbian partner, the Judges Association of Serbia, in combating human trafficking. It addresses three levels: criminal prosecution, (victim) protection and prevention. With the help of a broad public campaign, the population is being made aware of the dangers of human trafficking in general and child trafficking in particular. Capacities are also being developed in the judiciary and police. For example, a manual is in preparation for judges and public prosecutors to assist them in combating human trafficking. In addition, the relevant units, particularly the Service for Combating Organised Crime under the purview of the Serbian Ministry of Internal Affairs are trained in special investigative methods and technical support is provided to help the army take over of the agendas of the border police. Assistance is also given to the Department for the Coordination of Protection of Victims of Human Trafficking in identifying and reintegrating victims. (Advancing institutional response to challenges of trafficking in human beings in the Republic of Serbia/Project no.: 8069-07/2007, 01.01.2008 – 31.12.2010; € 380,700)

Kosovo: Protection against domestic violence

An old school building, just next to the new school, is home to the Centre for Protection of Women and Children in Gjilane, a town of 80,000 inhabitants in south-eastern Kosovo. This is where women and children who have fallen victim to or are at risk of domestic violence can find refuge. They receive psychosocial support and legal advice as well as help in social and economic reintegration through vocational training, for example. In campaigns and workshops, the centre educates people on the dangers of domestic violence and effective prevention and countermeasures. The women's shelter is run by the NGO Liria and supported by Austrian

Development Cooperation. It cooperates closely with the courts and the police. Via an extensive network with relevant government and other non-governmental actors, it is working towards the adoption and implementation of an effective institutional and legal framework. It seeks to impart a greater sense of official responsibility by involving local and central institutions. The Gjilan municipality provides support along with the Kosovan Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare. (Combating Domestic Violence, Advocating Integrity – Centre for Protection of Women and Children in Gjilan/Gnjilane / Project no.: 7985-02/2010, 01.12.2010-30.11.2013, € 230,000; previous phases: Project no.: 7985-00/2002, 1.4.2003–31.10.2004, € 186,000 or Project no.: 7985-01/2006, 01.10.2006–30.09.2009, € 225,500)

Nicaragua: A better future for children, youth and their parents

The population of Gondega, a small town in the North of Nicaragua, suffers from high unemployment, juvenile crime, poverty and low living standards, with children, youth and women worst affected. The situation is also deteriorating due to lack of investments. To improve future prospects for children and youth from underprivileged social classes and their parents, Austrian Development Cooperation supports the La Fraternidad cultural centre. It provides initial and further training and facilities for meaningful leisure activities, such as courses in woodwork, dancing, handicraft, sewing, painting and drawing and computers. In cookery courses, adults and children learn about balanced nutrition. Extra tuition in Spanish and mathematics improves learning outcomes at school. Basic facilities have been installed, such as a new kitchen or a multipurpose room for seminars. Training will improve opportunities on the labour market and help curb juvenile crime. By reflecting on how to treat them, the parents develop respect and esteem for their children.

Internships of graduates from an Austrian technical college and a higher educational establishment at the cultural centre facilitate ongoing exchange between the children and youth in Condenga and young people from Austria. (Promotion and Education of Children and Youth; Nicaragua Brigades - ARGE for free Nicaragua. Local project partner: Asociación para el programa preventivo la fraternidad. Project no.: 2319-02/2009, 01.05.2009-30.04.2012, € 45,700)

Lebanon: Hope for women and girls in the Nahr el-Bared refugee camp

Nahr el-Bared is a Palestinian refugee camp 16 km north of the city of Tripoli in the North of Lebanon. Due to the conflict between the Lebanese army and the militant group, Fatah Al Islam, about 27,000 of some 31,000 refugees had to leave the camp or the surrounding territory in mid-2007. The hostilities had a traumatic impact, especially on children, youth, women and other particularly vulnerable groups.

Support and care for displaced persons is often a matter of life and death. Together with local and international partners, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) is engaged in providing basic relief to Palestinian refugees. Austria also makes a contribution. The UN organisation provides food, water and sanitary facilities, basic preventive health care and shelter. Particular support is given to families at risk of having to live as refugees over a longer period. Assistance also focuses on displaced or returnee women and girls, as these play a particularly significant role in keeping families together and reintegration into the community. The victims are given psychosocial support and receive vocational training and financial grants and/or loans to improve their opportunities to earn a livelihood. (Capacity Building for Women and Girls from Nahr el-Bared Camp, United Nations Relief and Works Agency, Project no: 2322-00/2008, 01.11.2008–30.06.2011, € 503,850)



Further information on the subject

Basic sources

- Text of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child:
<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/crc.htm>, www.unicef.org/crc/
- UN Committee on the Rights of the Child (interpretations of children's rights) -
<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/index.htm>
- Website of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child
<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/index.htm>
- Austrian National Action Plan for Children's Rights (incl. ADC) (German)
<http://www.kinderrechte.gv.at/home/in-oesterreich/nap---nationaler-aktionsplan/content.html>
(Federal Ministry of Health, Family and Youth)
- FMEIA, National Action Plan against Human Trafficking covering the period from 2009-2011 (English),
http://webapps01.un.org/vawdatabase/uploads/TFM_Aktionsplan_engl_V20091007_LAYOUT_FINAL.pdf
- Resources on approaches to children's rights in development cooperation -
www.crin.org/hrbap/ (CRIN)

International

- United Nations International Childrens' Emergency Fund/UNICEF and/or Austrian National Committee for UNICEF - www.unicef.org, www.unicef.at
- UNICEF Innocenti Research Centre (studies and reports) - www.unicef-icdc.org
- UNICEF (2010), *Progress for Children – Achieving the MDGs with Equity*,
http://www.unicef.org/publications/files/Progress_for_Children-No.9_EN_081710.pdf
- UNICEF (2007), *The State of the World's Children 2007: Gender Equality* -
www.unicef.org/sowc07/
- UNICEF statistics and database on children and women - www.childinfo.org
- UNESCO (education) - portal.unesco.org/education/
- International Labour Organization (ILO)/International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) - www.ilo.org/public/english/standards/ipec/
- WHO (child and adolescent development) – www.who.int/child-adolescent-health/dev.htm
- World Bank (children and youth) - www.worldbank.org/childrenandyouth
- United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (children) -
<http://www.unhcr.org/refworld/children.html>
- United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (child refugees) - www.unhcr.ch/children/
- UN Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children & Armed Conflict –
www.un.org/special-rep/children-armed-conflict/ and/or www.un.org/children/conflict
- UN Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography -
<http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/children/rapporteur/index.htm>
- United Nations Study on Violence against Children (2006) - www.unviolencestudy.org
- Paris Principles – Principles and Guidelines on Children Associated with Armed Forces or Armed Groups (Definition of child soldiers, 2007) -
www.diplomatie.gouv.fr/en/IMG/pdf/Paris_Conference_Principles_English_31_January.pdf

- UN Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Resource Centre, Integrated Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Standards (IDDRS), 2006 - www.unddr.org
- Human Security Network/FMA/Ludwig Boltzman Institute for Human Rights (2003), Child Rights Training Curriculum: Child Protection, Monitoring and Rehabilitation - <http://www.univie.ac.at/bim/php/bim/get.php?id=87>
- Child Rights Information Network (CRIN – child participation, education, HIV/AIDS etc) - www.crin.org
- International Save the Children Alliance - www.savethechildren.net
- Global March Against Child Labour - www.globalmarch.org
- Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers - www.child-soldiers.org
- European Children's Network, *What About Us? Children's Rights in the European Union*, EURONET 2005 - www.crin.org/docs/Ruxton_Report_WhatAboutUs.pdf

European Union

- EU Children's Rights in the EU's external policy - http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/human_rights/child/index_en.htm
- EU Council Conclusions on the promotion and protection of the rights of the child in the European Union's external action - the development and humanitarian dimensions (2008) - http://www.eu2008.si/en/News_and_Documents/Council_Conclusions/May/0526_GAERC-pravice_otrok.pdf
- EU Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflict (2008) - <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/10019.en08.pdf>
- EU Guidelines for the Promotion and protection of the Rights of the Child - <http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cmsUpload/16031.07.pdf>
- Implementation Strategy for Guidelines on Children and Armed Conflicts, Doc 8285/1/06 Rev 1, 25 April 2006 - ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/hr/news65.pdf
- Checklist for the Integration of the Protection of Children affected by Armed Conflict into ESDP Operations, Doc. 9767/06, 23 May 2006 - <http://register.consilium.europa.eu/pdf/en/06/st09/st09767.en06.pdf>