

We are also human beings: a guide to children's rights in Zimbabwe

Practical ways to introduce young children to their rights

This article consists of a selection of practical exercises for children that introduce them to their rights and help them to promote these. It is drawn from We are also human beings: a guide to children's rights in Zimbabwe, produced for UNICEF by the African Community Publishing and Development Trust (ACPD) through the community publishing process with about 500 children in Zimbabwe. In the community publishing process, learners develop their confidence, creativity and skills by assisting in the design of their own learning materials. Children/young people aged from 3 to 18 years contributed from all provinces of Zimbabwe.



The purpose of the book is to inform, persuade and educate children and adults regarding the issue of children's rights, and in so doing encourage and motivate them to promote children's rights in Zimbabwe. It is essentially a practical manual for direct work with children and adults that includes many practical exercises. Although designed for children from 10 to 17 years, many of its approaches and ideas also seem useful for younger

children too, perhaps in cooperation with older children and adults.

A companion publication called *A reference guide to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and its implementation in Zimbabwe* is designed to be used in conjunction with *We are also human beings: a guide to children's rights in Zimbabwe*. More information about each is available from UNICEF. ○

1: Activities to introduce children to their rights and responsibilities

Girls, boys, dolls and puppets

1. Children collect materials suitable for making dolls or puppets, e.g. old socks, cloth, wool, string, wire, card, wood, seeds, dried leaves, etc.
2. Each child makes a doll or puppet.
3. Children display their dolls and puppets.
4. They discuss, with the help of an older child or adult, the following questions:
 - What is the difference between a child and a doll or puppet?
 - Why should children be treated differently from things?
 - How do children want to be treated:
 - by adults?
 - by other children?

Purpose of this activity

To help children understand that they are human beings – that is, active, thinking, creative people who should be treated with respect and who should treat others with respect.

Small is beautiful

1. Children hunt for beautiful, small objects, eg a coloured stone, a shell, a bead, a flower.
2. They make a display of what they have collected.
3. Then they make up a poem together, called 'small is beautiful' which should end with some lines about the beauty and value of children as small people.

Purpose of this activity

To help them recognise their own value.

Our pride in ourselves

1. Children divide into pairs (made up of friends)
2. Each pair is given crayons or chalk and a piece of paper or card, as large as a child. If paper is not available, find an old wall or floor where children can draw with chalk.
3. One child lies down on the paper, or against a wall, while the other child draws around him/her. Then they change roles.
4. Each child decorates his/her picture, to make it a self portrait (a picture of themselves), writes his/her name, and inside the drawing writes or draws the talents, abilities and achievements that the child is most proud of. If a child finds it difficult to list his/her talents and abilities, the friend can assist.
5. Then all the children look at a display of the big drawings they did, which show their pride in themselves.

Purpose of this activity

To increase children's confidence, and sense of their own value.

Secret admirer

1. Each child writes down his/her name on a small piece of paper, and then folds it.
2. The names (pieces of paper) are mixed in a hat or bag and each child takes a piece of paper, but does not show or tell anyone what name is on it.

3. Each child is instructed to become a secret admirer of the child named on the piece of paper. That means for a day, week or month (the children can decide for how long), the secret admirer quietly helps and encourages this special friend.
4. There's a discussion (at the end of the agreed period) about:
 - Who did you think your secret admirer was?
 - Did you enjoy being a secret admirer?
 - If we treat a person as a special friend, how will that person treat us?
 - Are there children in our area that we do not play with, who could become our special friends in the future if we treated them with affection and respect?

Purpose of this activity

To encourage children to treat other children well, and to widen their circle of friends.

2: An activity to introduce children's right to development

Changing faces

1. Children are encouraged to collect waste materials suitable for making hats and masks.
2. They are asked to transform their faces by creating home made hats, masks and even beards and wigs so that it becomes impossible to recognise them.
3. Children invite other children and adults to

see their display of 'changing faces', and they line up behind a curtain or wall, with only their decorated faces showing, to see if the audience can recognise who is who.

4. Later, they can make up plays and games using their hats and masks.

Purpose of this activity

To encourage children to be more creative and play more imaginatively.

3: Activities to introduce children to their right to participation

Freeze

1. One lively child is chosen to lead the other children, out of doors.
2. The leader moves as strangely and unpredictably as possible e.g. marching, hopping, skipping, taking huge strides, dancing on tiptoe, and moving hands and arms in imaginative ways.
3. Children in the line try to follow the leader exactly.
4. Every now and again, the leader shouts "Freeze!" and the children have to stop moving immediately, keeping the position they were last in.
5. After about ten minutes, another child can take over as leader.
6. There is a discussion based on the following questions:
 - How did you enjoy the game?

- To what extent do you children have to follow adults in everyday life?
- When is it important to follow adults, and obey them?
- Should adults always be obeyed?
- When is it important for children to think for themselves and make their own decisions?

Purpose of this activity

To encourage children to be creative and play more imaginatively

Chaos into order

Children run around outdoors playing 'catch'. If a child catches another, these two children have to hold hands as they run and try to catch other children. Eventually the lines of children who have caught each other and are holding hands gets bigger and when the last children catch each other and hold hands, a circle is formed. Children can dance in the circle and can make up or be led in songs about their rights.

There is a discussion covering:

- How did you enjoy the game?
- Why can an organised group of children achieve more than scattered individual children?
- How can we organise ourselves better as children to promote our rights?

Purpose of this activity

To encourage children to organise in order to strengthen their position.