

Making Children's Rights Real

Learning Activities and Actions on
Children's Rights for Children in
First, Second and Third Class



ombudsman
do leanaí
for children



Children Now, Rights Now



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Dear Principal and Teacher,

As Ombudsman for Children, one of my roles is to promote awareness of children's rights, including among children and young people and including the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Making Children's Rights Real materials aim to assist you to explore children's rights with your students in the context of curriculum teaching and learning. The materials have been developed by an experienced team of educationalists at the Centre for Human Rights and Citizenship Education, Dublin City University. I would like to thank Professor Fionnuala Waldron, Brian Ruane, Dr Benjamin Mallon, Rowan Oberman and Dr Seline Keating for their work to devise the materials.

People sometimes ask us where children's rights are defined. Two key reference points are the Constitution, which is the primary legal instrument in Ireland, and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which is a set of internationally agreed human rights standards.

Ireland ratified the UNCRC in 1992. By doing so, Ireland made a commitment under international law to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of children set out in Convention, without discrimination. 2017 is the 25th anniversary of this important commitment by the State to work towards making children's rights under the UNCRC a reality in the daily lives of children and young people living in Ireland.

In 2016, we undertook a consultation called Tune In, which sought children and young people's views on how they would like the OCO to go about raising awareness of children's rights among children and young people into the future. School was most frequently identified as the place where children and young people want to get information about children's rights. Teachers, together with parents/guardians, were most frequently identified as the people children and young people trust and are happy to receive information about children's rights from.

In light of these results and in the context of this important 25th anniversary year, I am delighted that we can make the Making Children's Rights Real suite of materials available to schools. I hope the materials will support your work and that you and your students will find the materials educational and enjoyable.

The materials include an important focus on supporting children and young people to implement an action for children's rights (see Activity 3). We would be delighted if you could tell us about any action you take by emailing us at education@oco.ie or by linking in with us on Twitter (@OCO_ireland), Facebook (@OCOireland) or Instagram (@ombudsmanforchildren).

Many thanks,



Niall Muldoon

Ombudsman for Children
2017



How to use these Materials: Information for Teachers

Introduction to these materials

These materials have been developed for the Ombudsman for Children's Office (OCO) by the Centre for Human Rights and Citizenship Education, Dublin City University, to support children in First, Second and Third class (children approximately 7 to 9 years old) to explore and take action in relation to children's rights.

Activities

This resource includes three activities:

- **Activity 1 – Mapping Children's Rights**
Taking children's own views and ideas as a starting point, this activity develops children's understanding of children's rights and awareness of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).
- **Activity 2 – Realising Children's Rights**
This activity uses a local community map to support children to connect children's rights with places in their local community and to explore the roles that different people in their local community can play to help respect, protect and fulfil children's rights.
- **Activity 3 – Action! A Vision for Children's Rights**
This activity supports children to create a vision for children and children's rights to share and discuss with other members of their school community and local community.

Accompanying resources and materials

The **resources** developed for use during the activities can be found at the end of this pack and are numbered to assist identification. A **slideshow** of symbols representing children's rights under the UNCRC and a **poster** of the UNCRC are available on the OCO's website to further support your work with the children. The OCO's website also provides a **Support File for Teachers**, which contains supplementary information, including a number of fact files, a glossary of terms relevant to children's rights, and links to several websites, which offer additional information that might inform your work to develop classroom and whole school approaches to children's rights education.

Educational Principles and Approach

There are five sets of materials belonging to Making Children's Rights Real, each of which is focused on a particular age group of children and young people. The materials have been developed using a spiralled approach to educational planning. While the activities have been developed for specific age groups and can be used as standalone activities or run across a number of lessons, there are a number of key principles which underpin all of the materials. These principles include the importance of raising children and young people's awareness and understanding of their rights; affording children and young people opportunities to express their views and to take part in decision-making; and supporting children and young people to take age-appropriate action to influence and effect change.

Links to the Primary Curriculum

These materials will support your work to deliver several elements of the primary curriculum, including SPHE, Literacy, SESE, Visual Arts and Music.

Activity 1: Mapping Children's Rights

Purpose:

- To develop children's understanding of the idea of rights and of children's rights
- To introduce the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC)
- To explore the idea that children's rights apply to all children everywhere

Guiding questions:

- What are rights?
- What are children's rights?
- Why is the UNCRC important?

Learning outcomes:

Today we will learn about:

- why the UNCRC is important
- how children's rights apply to all children everywhere

What you need:

- For each small group, one A3 sheet with the heading 'Children have a right to ...' and pencils/pens to write with
- Music
- Copies of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child poster (Resource 1) and/or show the pdf of the UNCRC poster on the OCO's website on the whiteboard

For extension activities:

- For each small group of children, a set of the symbols illustrating children's rights (Resource 2)
- Storybook: I Have the Right to be a Child by Alain Serres and Aurelia Fronty (available to view on YouTube: www.youtube.com/watch?v=tOsQ5MVXZzk)

Steps

Start by: Exploring Rights

1. Introduce the children to the concept of rights by suggesting that rights are things that people should have (e.g. clean water) and be able to do (e.g. express their views). Ask the children to get into a circle. Using the prompt 'We have a right to...!' and 'Think, Pair, Share', support the children to brainstorm what rights they think children have and record their suggestions. Facilitate a discussion with the children around their ideas, focusing initially on common themes that emerge from the pairs before going on to discuss their ideas in more depth. The following questions can be used to support this:

- How many pairs had an idea that was related to ... (e.g. food, play, healthcare, education, a home, being safe, family and care, etc.)?
- Why do you think that children should have the right to?
- Does anyone else agree/disagree with this idea?

Develop by: Mapping children's rights

2. Ask the children to get into small groups of four or five. Ask each group to talk about the previous discussion in the circle and to agree and record the rights they think are important for children on an A3 page with the heading 'Children have a right to...'. Explain to the children that they are going to share their ideas with each other.
3. Leaving their A3 page on each table, ask the children to circulate around the room while music is playing. When the music stops, the children sit at a table different to their original one. They examine and discuss the rights written on the A3 page and decide collectively whether to record additional rights.
4. Repeat step 3 a number of times (equal to the number of groups), with the children sitting at a different table each time.
5. Ask the children to return to their original groups and facilitate each group to present the rights recorded on their page. Develop an agreed class list of children's rights based on the children's presentations and record the class list on a separate sheet of paper or on the whiteboard.

Finish by: Introducing the UNCRC

6. Introduce the idea that countries throughout the world have agreed a list of children's rights for children everywhere. Explain that this agreement is called the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.
7. Hand out copies of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child poster (Resource 1) and/or show the pdf of the poster (available on the OCO's website) on the whiteboard. Facilitate the children to compare their class list of children's rights with the rights shown on the poster. The following questions can guide the comparison:
 - On our class list we recorded the right to Is that right on the poster?
 - Are there rights on our class list that we can't see on the poster?
 - Can we find a right on the poster that these rights on our class list might fit under?
 - Are there rights on the poster that are not on our class list? If so, what are they and should we add them to our class list?
 - Why do you think countries all over the world have decided that children everywhere should have the right to?
8. Support the children to reflect on the questions 'What have we learned?' and 'What would we like to learn more about?'

Suggestions for adapting the activity:

This activity can be adapted where space is an issue by moving the A3 posters from group to group rather than the children moving from table to table/poster to poster. All discussion can be conducted in circle format or with children sitting in their groups.

Suggestions for extending the activity:

I Have the Right to be a Child

Read the children this story by Alain Serres and Aurelia Fronty or show them the video of this story on YouTube at www.youtube.com/watch?v=tOsq5MVXZzk

A Children's Rights Treasure Hunt

Explain to the children that they are going on a children's rights treasure hunt in their school. Give each group a set of the children's rights symbols (Resource 2), with a coloured dot or a number on each set to represent each different group. To familiarise the children with the activity, choose two or three of the rights and ask the children 'Where might we find the right to in our school?'

In groups, children explore the school and school grounds and place each icon where they think the right it represents can be found. When the children have placed all of the rights, they return to the classroom. When all the groups have returned, take the children on a class walk, either following the trail of a particular right (e.g. all of the places labelled with the right to play) or all of the rights associated with a particular space (e.g. different rights placed in the school yard or hall). Note contrasting spaces, different rights, etc. contributed by each group and discuss their choices.

Activity 2: Realising Children's Rights

Purpose:

To introduce the idea that:

- o different adults and organisations have roles to play in helping to realise children's rights
- o every State (country), which ratifies the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child has an obligation to respect, protect and fulfill children's rights under the UNCRC for children living in their country

Guiding questions:

- o In what places are children's rights visible?
- o Which individuals/groups in those places have a role in helping to realise children's rights?

Learning outcomes:

Today we will learn about:

- o family and community members who help to make children's rights real in different places

What you need:

- o Street map of the local area - one A3 copy per group of four children
- o UN Convention on the Rights of the Child poster (Resource 1)
- o Post-it notes and markers

For extension activity:

- o OCO video about the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (available at vimeo.com/203109950)

Steps

Start by: Mapping children's rights in the local area

1. Give each group of four children a copy of the map of the local area.
2. If the map has places (e.g. school, hospital, garda station) labelled, then skip to Step 3. If the map does not have any places labelled, ask the class to name any important places in the local area. When these places have been named, ask the children in their groups to locate and draw the places on their map.
3. Give each group of children a copy of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child poster (Resource 1). Ask the children to work together in their groups to label on their respective maps the places where they can find their rights (e.g. the right to play, the right to rest, the right to healthcare, the right to be safe, the right to be

heard, the right to know your rights, the right to food and water). In this regard, suggest to the children that certain rights might be found in more than one place.

4. Facilitate the groups to share their maps and compile a class map on the board/ whiteboard.

Develop by: Exploring roles that can help realise children's rights

5. Using 'Think, Pair, Share', invite the children to think about and discuss who the adults are in each place on the class map who have a role to play in making their rights real (e.g. local health centre – right to healthcare – doctor/nurse).
6. Ask the children to draw and label these adults on post-it notes. Add their post-it notes to the class map.
7. Taking each adult role in turn, ask the children what they think the adult might need to support them with helping to make children's rights real. Support the children to consider who or what might be responsible for giving these adults what they need to support them in their roles (e.g. teachers need training to teach children and they go to college to get the training they need).

Note for Teachers: The types of resources that the children might discuss could include physical, financial, educational and/or organisational resources. While the children do not need to be aware of such categories, the following questions may support discussion depending on the children's suggestions:

- o What do the adults you have named need to do play their role well?
- o Where do they get from? Who is responsible for providing?
- o Can they do it on their own or are there other adults or groups of adults who can/ need to help them?

Finish by: Inviting a 'children's rights champion' to visit

8. Identify an adult whose role has been discussed by the children as being connected with children's rights (e.g. teacher, SNA, school bus driver, garda, nurse, doctor, parent, sports coach). Invite the adult to talk with the children about their role and how it relates to children's lives.
9. In advance of the adult's visit, support the children to develop questions to ask the adult and to think about ways they could share their learning about children's rights. You could share the children's questions with the adult in advance of the visit. You might also like to support the children to create a certificate to give to the adult when they visit, which recognises them as a 'children's rights champion'.
10. During the visit, facilitate a discussion about how the adult's role supports children's rights and how the adult can be supported in their role.
11. Support the children to reflect on the questions 'What have we learned?' and 'What would we like to learn more about?'

Suggestions for adapting the activity:

Ask children to draw their own maps of the local area for use in steps 1 and 2. Alternatively, develop a generic local map with only trees, green areas and roads for display on the whiteboard. Ask children to develop images/symbols to represent some of the key places you might find in a local community, e.g. homes, school, shop, playground, GAA club, etc. Invite children to position their images/icons on the map. Then continue from step 3 onwards.

Suggestions for extending the activity:

Depending on the children's level of understanding, you could use examples to introduce the concept of the State and the idea that the State has an important role to play in making children's rights real (e.g. the Oireachtas makes laws about lots of different things affecting children, including education and schools; the Government makes decisions about how public money is used to help fund things like education, healthcare and housing). In this regard, you could show the children the OCO's video about the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (available at vimeo.com/203109950), which highlights the commitment the Irish State made to respect, protect and fulfil children's rights under the UNCRC. You might then support the children to share their views on the fact that Ireland made this commitment to children and their rights. For example, do they think it is important that Ireland made this commitment? Why/why not? What are the key things they think every child in Ireland should have and be able to do? Do they think more needs to be done to protect children's rights in Ireland and, if so, what would they like to see done?

Activity 3: Action! A Vision for Children's Rights

Purpose:

- To develop awareness of children's rights in the school and local community
- To provide children with opportunities to communicate with adults about children's rights

Guiding questions:

- What is our vision for children and children's rights into the future?
- How can we share and discuss this vision with others?

Learning outcomes:

As an action, we will:

- develop a vision for children and children's rights and share it with our school and local community

What you need:

- Materials to create posters

For adapting and extending the activity:

- Video recorder
- Camera
- Other materials of your choice

Steps

Start by: Creating a vision for children's rights

1. Support the children to brainstorm what they wish for children and their rights in the future. Ask children to write and illustrate their wishes.

Develop by: Communicating our vision for children's rights

2. Help the children to create a display (e.g. a large poster or a series of posters) under the heading 'Our wishes for children and their rights'.

Finish by: Discussing our vision for children's rights

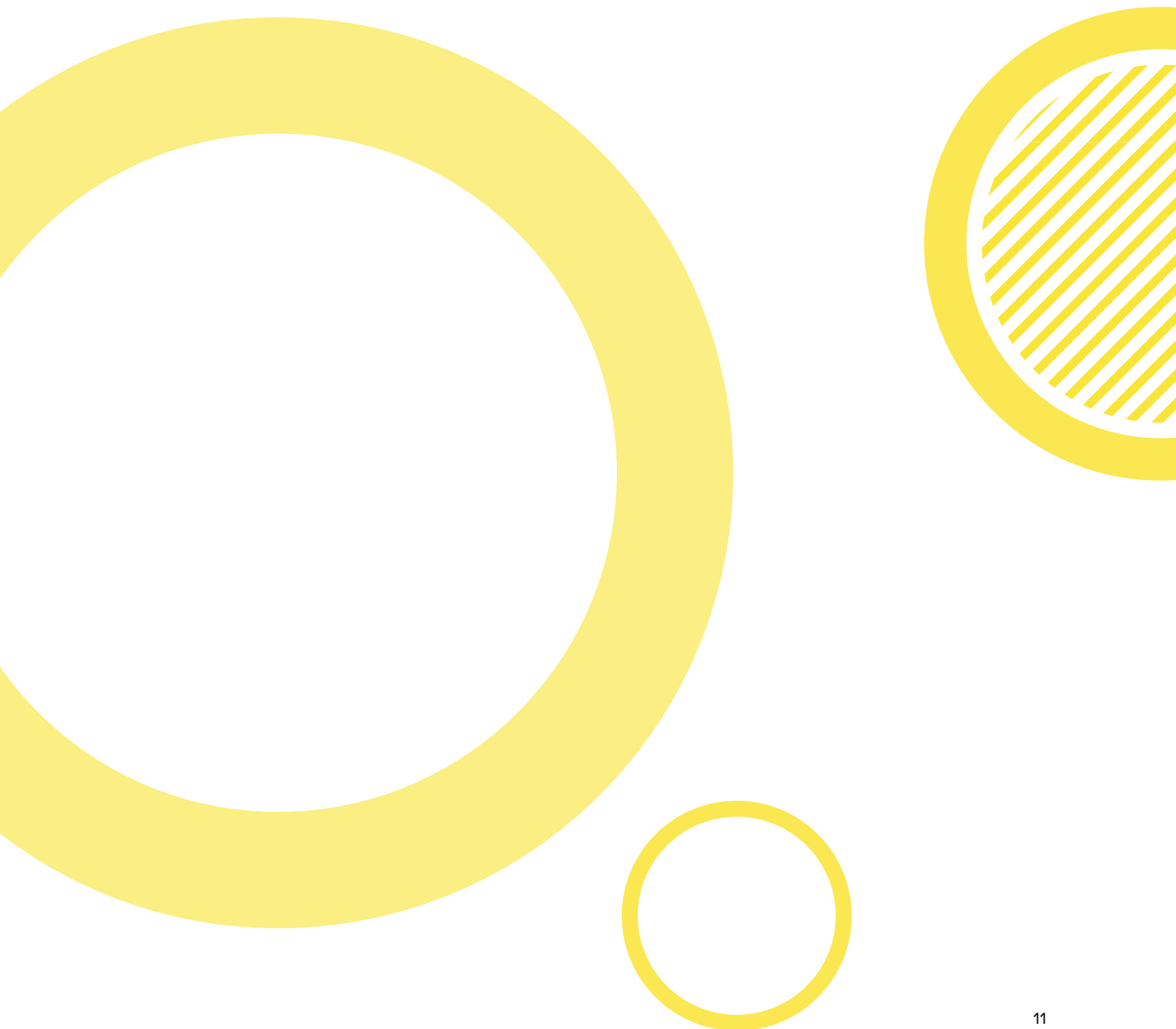
3. Invite members of the school community (other children, staff and parents/guardians) and the local community to come and view the display. Use the display as a starting point for the children and adults present to share their wishes for children and children's rights into the future.

Suggestions for adapting the activity:

If you have the necessary consent and equipment, you could use video to record the children expressing their wishes for children and children's rights. Once made, this video could be shown in school or in an alternative local community setting as part of an event on children's rights and as an alternative starting point for the children and adults present to share their wishes for children and children's rights.

Suggestions for extending the activity:

Using one or more methods (e.g. a graffiti wall, a wish tree), support the other children and adults attending the event to record their wishes for children and children's rights. If your school is incorporating children's rights into school planning in the longer term, the wishes made by children and adults could be recorded (e.g. through photographs) and included in a time capsule that can be revisited in the future. The time capsule might also include other objects created or provided by children and adults in the community to represent their wishes for children and children's rights.



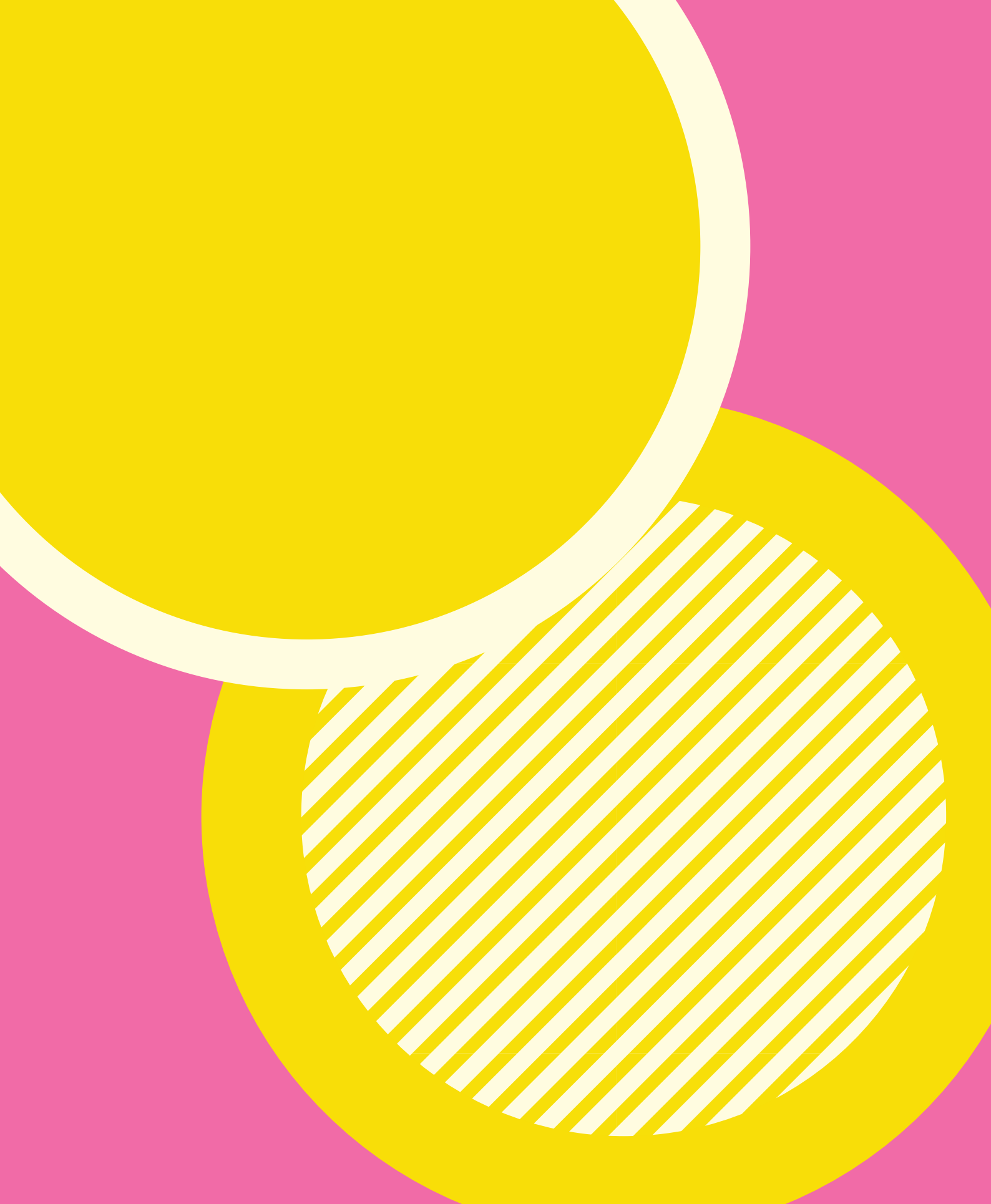
Resource 4: UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

The **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child** is a list of children's rights. These rights are for every child up to 18 years old. All children should be able to experience these rights as they are growing up.



Resource 2: Symbols of children's rights





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