



BRAHMA KUMARIS WORLD SPIRITUAL UNIVERSITY

Rights of the Child

Statement to the

56th Commission on Human Rights

Item 13: Rights of the Child

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It is often observed, that in developing countries where there is poverty, inadequate provision for education, health and clean water, children's faces still beam with radiant smiles and sparkling eyes. They may be totally unaware of their rights yet they possess perhaps the most important right of all, as stated in the preamble to the Convention on the Rights of the Child – “that for the full and harmonious development of his or her personality, he should grow up in a family environment, in an atmosphere of happiness, love, and understanding.” These children lead a simple life where family values are very much alive and where deep respect still exists between parents and children.

Yet, in contrast, in more affluent societies, where rights are guaranteed by law, children don't seem to smile so much and are often discontented, even aggressive. They often lack respect for each other and for adults, and may be undisciplined, demanding, hyperactive, and suffer from various types of addiction. In society in general today we are witnessing the progressive breakdown of the family unit and with it the lack of family values, so that children feel unloved, and unsupported and turn to other sources of satisfaction and stimulation. Once children have developed negative habits, they are difficult to remove, and may be carried on into adulthood, and then transmitted to the next generation. It is essential to break this vicious cycle. The role of the family unit is vital in fostering the all-round development of the child. Every support possible should be given by governments, the UN and non-governmental organizations to encourage and protect family life.

Children are largely dependent on adults not only for material needs but for moral and spiritual guidance. A child is influenced by and copies not only other children but also the adults that surround him or her, whether it be in the family, at school, in the community or even via television, the internet and the media in general. What sort of messages are they receiving about how to lead their lives? Every one of us therefore has the responsibility to set an example for the children of our world, to be a good role model. We need to demonstrate a lifestyle of simplicity, free from addiction, based on universal values that promote contentment, dignity and a sense of purpose.

The year 2000 has been declared the International Year for the Culture of Peace by the United Nations General Assembly. UNESCO is playing a major role in its implementation.

Manifesto 2000 is a key part of UNESCO's promotion of the Culture of Peace. The Manifesto is a pledge to abide by 6 universal principles. They are:

- (1) to respect all life
- (2) to reject violence
- (3) to share with others
- (4) to listen to understand
- (5) to preserve the planet
- (6) to rediscover unity and solidarity.

If we all, adults and children, lived by these principles there would no longer be the need for Children's Rights. The Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University has been designated, along with other NGOs, as "messenger for Manifesto 2000" by UNESCO.

Education is one of the most powerful tools that we possess for bringing about positive change in society. The Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University since it was founded in 1937 has provided an education for the development of the human individual through the emergence of innate divine qualities, recognising that the original state of each human being is one of goodness. "Living Values: an Educational Programme" is a partnership among educators around the world, supported by UNESCO and sponsored by the Spanish National Committee of UNICEF, Planet Society and the Brahma Kumaris. The programme, now established in over 70 countries, is based on the understanding that children are naturally curious, eager to learn, and have many beautiful qualities. They are creative, caring, and can think for themselves. It is essential that as adults we accept our responsibility to provide a values-based environment which encourages creativity, self-reliance and self-esteem for our children.

Brahma Kumaris World Spiritual University

The BKWSU is a non-governmental organization in general consultative status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) and in consultative status with UNICEF.
The University was founded in India in 1937 and has branches in over 100 countries worldwide.
It has been affiliated to the United Nations Department of Public Information since 1980.

www.bkun.org

OFFICE FOR THE UNITED NATIONS
Suite 436
866, UN Plaza
New York, NY 10017
U.S.A.
Tel.: +1-212-688-1335
Fax.: +1-212-504-2798
bkun@bkwsu.org

HEADQUARTERS
Pandav Bhawan
Mount Abu 307501
Rajasthan
India
Tel.: +91-2974-238261
Fax.: +91-2974-238952
abu@bkivv.org

INTL. COORDINATING OFFICE
Global Cooperation House
65-69 Pound Lane
London NW10 2HH
U.K.
Tel.: +44-20-8727-3350
Fax.: +44-20-8727-3351
london@bkwsu.org

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