

Celebrating 30 years of child rights

Blog from Heidi Coetzee, Save the Children NZ CEO

Today Save the Children celebrated the 30th anniversary of the signing of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC); one of many NGOs in New Zealand and around the world that will mark this milestone in a variety of ways.

Save the Children has been fighting for children's rights for 100 years. Our founder, Eglantyne Jebb wrote the original Declaration on the Rights of the Child.

This short but clear document asserted what she believed were the human rights of every child. Stressing the need to especially remember "forgotten" children.

The Declaration later developed into the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which was adopted by world leaders 30 years ago, on 20 November 1989. This landmark human rights treaty has been signed by 196 countries including every member of the United Nations, except the United States. It was ratified in New Zealand in 1983.

The UNCRC sets the minimum standards and overarching principles by which every society should treat every child and has played a critical role in catalysing progress for children over the last 30 years.

Worldwide we've made some great progress. Since 1990,

- the number of children dying before their fifth birthday from preventable causes has halved
- there are 42% fewer children out of primary school than in 2000
- the number of children who are stunted as a result of malnutrition has fallen by a third.

However, there is still a long way to go to ensure every last child can reach their full potential. We need renewed political commitment to further implement the UNCRC so that children everywhere have the same opportunities no matter where they are born.

As part of the anniversary Save the Children joined with 28 other NGOs to ask the Government to recommit to the Convention to ensure all children in New Zealand have their rights respected and upheld in practice, policy and law.

And today the Government has announced that they will recommit to the Convention. We are pleased that now our Government will have to consider child rights in everything they do. They will have to deliver on their promise to respect and uphold the rights defined in the UNCRC so that we create a world where every child is safe, has a healthy start in life, is included, and has the opportunity to learn.

On a lighter note we were joined today by 80 pre-schoolers to celebrate children and their rights at a special event at Parliament to mark the anniversary. The event, hosted by Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern, was jointly organised by Save the Children, Barnardos, OMEP and the Children's Rights Alliance to raise awareness of the anniversary of UNCRC, International Children's Day and children's rights in our daily lives. The children played games, had a story read to them by the PM, played in and helped open the new playground in Parliament Grounds and had a small celebratory lunch. Check out our [Facebook page](#) for photos.