Encouraging children’s dreams and aspirations
Promoting fraternity between children and awareness of children’s human rights

20TH NOVEMBER
UNIVERSAL CHILDREN’S DAY

CELEBRATING, RESPECTING AND PROTECTING CHILDREN THE WORLD OVER

Geneva, Switzerland

In collaboration with the individuals and organisations listed on the back page
Children realising their dreams

On 20th November, as we celebrate the United Nation’s Universal Day of Children, we are reminded of Nelson Mandela’s words,

“Children are our greatest treasure. They are our future.”

Speaking at a later occasion, Nelson Mandela also said:

“...while children need to be guided they also have an entrenched right to be whatever they want to be and that they can achieve this only if they are given the space to dream and live out their dreams.”

In honouring the millions of children from all walks of life across the world, we encourage them to live their dreams. This must be matched with commitment from adults to give them the space to express themselves, to develop, and to be free to learn about the world around them. Today we want children to realise how special they are and make them the focus of the Day’s celebrations. This day also reminds us of the important role children play in society as custodians of our planet and our future. In compiling children’s work from six countries, we give them the opportunity to share their thoughts and dreams. Our aim is to encourage children to have dreams, explore their life options, and set goals to achieve whatever they want in life, regardless of their circumstances at birth. Children should not be defined by their background, whether socio-economic, religious or ethnic - but should be encouraged to pursue passionately the endless opportunities offered them to change the world, contributing to making it a better place. It is children’s dreams and thoughts today that will ultimately influence future actions and life directions.

Central to creating an enabling environment where children are free to dream and pursue their goals is respecting their rights so that they can reach their full potential through access to quality education, health care, sanitation, and allowing them to live free from conflict and fear. It is hoped that through sharing this work and raising awareness of children’s rights, cross-cultural understanding can be promoted and enhanced while highlighting diversity in different parts of the world. We are truly grateful to all the children and adults who have contributed to this effort and wish to say a special ‘THANK YOU’ from the Action on Child, Early and Forced Marriage committee.
The drawings below are from the Centre d’Animation in Lausanne, Switzerland where children from immigrant families attend the Wednesday “mecredi d’animation accueil libre” on a voluntary basis. This group of children aged from 5 to 9 years from Somalia, Portugal, Turkey, Lebanon, Morocco and West Africa, were asked what they wanted to do or be when they were older. The responses below included a school teacher, karate instructor, doctor, heart surgeon and a writer. The youngest, Delal from Turkey who is under 5 years of age, was just happy to be let loose with some crayons...

The two group sessions were kindly organised by Caroline Bulay, Animatrice Socioculturelle at the Centre.
In these drawings the children share their aspirations and dreams about becoming a teacher, vet, nurse and a henna hand decorating artist. Gülay a 14 year old student also asked the younger children 2 questions. She asked them whether girls and boys could do the same jobs, to which most children replied yes, saying that men and women were equal except for one boy who said that men can be stronger than women. She also asked them whether they wanted to get married. With the exception of one boy, all of the children said that they did want to get married. However, one or two children said that there were some disadvantages for women, such as suffering when having children but they also said that there could be advantages for women like men paid for everything for women!

4 year old Leandro wants to be a car mechanic when he grows up.
The drawings below show insights into the imagination of a group of children aged from 4 to 9 from Switzerland.

These include becoming a racing driver, an astronaut to discover other planets, a palaeontologist as she adores learning about dinosaurs, a doctor and a policeman.
Emily, aged 11 from Switzerland

tells us about her hectic school life now and also what she imagines she will be doing in 10 years time.

I'm 11 now. I'm still at school in year 8 and its kind of a important year. But my schedule is very good, here it is:

I live 1 minute and 30 seconds away from school. In the morning i wake up at about 07:00, but if i'm not awake i get woken up at 07:10. I have a good breakfast, get dressed and leave to go to school.

I have school in French, this year im learning German and next year i will be lerning English. My friends are aged of 12 years, so i'm the yongest.

IN MY FUTURE

When i'm 21 i will be still be doing my architect studies. When i will have finish them i would really love to live in Le Mont sur Lausanne. It is a very quiet place but not to far from town. I would have a flat near a little stream and woods. So that if i want to i can go for walks with my dog. I dont have a dog yet but i will get one. Now i have 3 guppies. I would bring them with me too of course. I dont know if i want to have children, if i do, i would have two of them and i would get a bigger flat.
Here is my ideal schedule:

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20 NOVEMBRE - journée international des droits de l'enfant by Emily.

En Suisse: Les élèves sont stressés pour les ECR une année, en huitième.

Dans d'autres pays : Les enfants sont stressés chaque matin à leur réveil, ils doivent aller chercher de l'eau à la rivière ou du bois pour le feu. Les chanceux, ceux qui vont à l'école peuvent arriver après 5km de marche et l'école est fermée. D'autres (surtout des filles) travaillent toute la journée sous le soleil ou dans des usines.

Nous avons de la chance, nous pouvons décider avec qui, quand et à quel âge on veut se marier.

Elles parfois dès qu'elles ont 15 ans ou même plus jeune, elles doivent se marier avec l'homme choisi par les parents. Il peut arriver que l'homme a 40-50 ans de plus qu'elles.

Nous avons de la chance, nous devons être contents !

Aidons les enfants d'autre pays, on aimerait être aidé aussi !

Satya aged 9 from Switzerland shares her drawing of a happy little girl. At school Satya enjoys Science and French and says that when she grows up she might become a school teacher for young children or a pharmacist.
Madagascar

In this section three girls from an underprivileged region of Madagascar were briefly interviewed; two were sisters aged 12 and 13 who were selling sweets to earn money to live on and another girl who became a mother at the age of 15.

Zopineze
Bonjour, je m’appelle Zopineze, j’ai 12 ans et je suis à l’école primaire publique de La Marne. Aujourd’hui je vends des bonbons coco, comme tous les jours. Avec l’argent que je gagne j’achète de la nourriture, car mes parents sont loin, je ne sais pas vraiment où ils sont mais loin.

Moi je m’appelle Atanaze, j’ai 13 ans et suis dans la 7ème classe. Je vends des bonbons de coco. Je suis la sœur de Zopineze. Quand je serai grande je voudrais être institutrice.

Tassia
Bonjour, je m’appelle Tassia, j’ai 15 ans et j’étudie à l’école de la Sagesse. J’ai commencé à avoir des relations sexuelles en classe de 4ème – nous n’avions pas d’éducation sexuelle à l’école, et nous ignorions tout de la sexualité : je ne me suis rendue compte qu’au sixième mois que j’étais enceinte. J’ai maintenant une fille du nom de Souheta. Nous sommes nombreuses à nous trouver dans une situation analogue dans mon entourage: nous étions 6 filles à être tombées dedans sans nous rendre compte que nous étions tombées enceintes. Maintenant je voudrais pouvoir faire une formation pour trouver du travail et nourrir ma fille. Je souhaiterais continuer les études en cours du soir pour obtenir un diplôme. Pour éviter ce genre de situation il est important d’améliorer l’éducation à l’école, surtout par des cours d’éducation sociale et surtout d’éducation sexuelle. C’est une matière qu’il faut ajouter au programme scolaire.
This little girl lives in a rural mountainous region in Ocotepeque in Western Honduras where there are many challenges to reducing poverty, improving child nutrition, ensuring quality education and consequently to achieving better living conditions and raising awareness of children’s rights. However, despite the lower standard of living conditions compared to more developed countries, the children have similar aspirations for better lives, conditions and opportunities for themselves, their families and communities.

The children in these photos and the girls on the front cover are from Intibucá.
Students at WATU School in Tanzania engage in a healthy mix of formal education, cultural activities and sport.

A group of girls show off their beautiful native fabric designs during a recent fashion show. The school opened in 2005.

Photos of WATU School taken by Pontus Wallsten for Action on Child, Early and Forced Marriage.

Children at WATU school in Tanzania share some of their thoughts about what they want to do when they finish school …

“I would like to become a pilot because there are very few women pilots and I want to show that women can do what men can do.” Girl aged 13

“I would like to be a doctor so that I can help people who are dying from different diseases”. Boy aged 15

“I would like to become an evangelist and preach to people about the importance of God and in fact God is the one who created all of us.” Girl aged 15

“My ambition is to become a police woman so that I can reduce crimes like the killing of albinos and young children” Girl aged 13

“I would like to become an actress like Angelina Jolie because she has been chosen as the best actress in the world and I would like to be like her” Girl aged 16

“I would like to become an air hostess as I would like to learn many languages and to teach people how to use a parachute to escape from an airplane” Girl aged 14

“I would like to be a doctor specialising in the brain because there are only 7 doctors in East Africa, 5 in Kenya and 2 in Tanzania dealing with this problem… I want to tackle this problem locally and help the citizens of Tanzania who have brain diseases”. Boy aged 17

“My ambition is to be a pastor or a priest”. Boy aged 15

“I would like to become a computer engineer because I like to play with computer games”. Girl aged 11

“I would like to be an electrical engineer to provide electricity to the people living in rural areas because they are suffering without electricity”. Girl aged 15
Brazil

Celebrating the children of the world on Universal Children’s Day 20 November

These interviews with two young students in Brazil from the city of Belo Horizonte in Minas Gerais state were conducted in Portuguese and translated into English by Ana Lucia Neto, a teacher in a public school and coordinator of an educational program of the city hall of Belo Horizonte school, called ESCOLA INTEGRADA.

AL What is your name?
MV My name is Marcos Vinicius Silva
AL How old are you?
MV I am 13 years old
AL Where do you study?
MV I study at Escola Municipal Prof. Lourenço de Oliveira. I am in 8th grade
AL Who do you live with?
MV I live with my mother
AL Do you live near your school?
MV No, I live very far from school
AL How do you go to school?
MV by bus
AL How long do you stay in school during the day?
MV I stay from 8:00 a.m. to 17:30 p.m.

AL What activities do you there?
MV In the morning I stay in Escola Integrada and do activities like sports, music, dance, drawing and others, then at 12 I have lunch, and after lunch I do my regular studies like Portuguese, math, English, history, science, geography, arts and PE.
AL What do you would like to became when you grow older?
MV I intend to do a PhD in Biology.
AL What would you need to be able to fulfil this dream?
MV I will graduate, then do MBA and after do PhD.
AL Do you think that boys and girls can do the same jobs?
MV Yes, they can. I also think that is wrong men and women have different salaries (women have lower) and that is unfair.

AL What is your name?
PL My name is Pedro Lucas Alves da Silva
AL How old are you?
PL I am 13 years old
AL Where do you study?
PL I study at Escola Municipal Professor Lourenço de Oliveira in 8th grade
AL Who do you live with?
PL I live with my father, stepmother, grandmother and sisters
AL Do you live near your school? How do you go to school?
PL No, I live far from school and I take 3 buses
AL How long do you stay in school?
PL I arrive at 8:00 a.m. and leave at 6:30 p.m.
AL What activities do you there?
PL I have the normal school schedule with Portuguese, maths, English, science, history, geography, art, physical education, then we have lunch and after I leave for activities at the Program Escola Integrada, like music, dance, capoeira, sports etc.
AL What do you would like to became when you grow older?
PL I want to be a journalist

AL What would you need to do to fulfil this dream?
PL Study hard, with willpower and learning English and computer studies
AL Do you think that boys and girls can do the same jobs?
PL In my opinion both men and women can do all kinds of work. Neither sex can do more than the other.
France

This picture, drawn by Sasha from Nice, France, shows herself with her mother. The accompanying photo shows a very carefree and happy Sasha playing and dancing in the streets, enjoying her childhood as all children should as this is an important part of their growing up.

Sasha

A group of (mainly) adolescents from a ‘gymnase’ in Lausanne share with us their aspirations about the future. The question and response session was organised by Myriam, a 17 year old student, who was amazed by the multi-cultural backgrounds of her school friends.

A 19 year old Syrian refugee who had fled from the war and was now living in Switzerland said that her childhood dream had always been to become a medical doctor and she would pursue this dream. It was her choice without any pressure from her family.

Another 15 year old girl whose parents originated from Algeria and France wanted to work in the field of biology.

A 17 year old Moroccan and Swiss girl has always wanted to become a designer as she is very artistic and likes to express herself through art.

A 17 year old Serbian boy studying maths and physics did not know what he wanted to do after school.

Myriam, a 17 year old Swiss girl whose parents originated from Algeria and France wanted to become a medical doctor, although she is also interested in social work and psychology.

A 17 year old Somalian girl wants to practice psychology when she finishes school.

Emma

Emma who is 15 and a half from Annecy in France shares her ideas about becoming an Agronomist. From an early age she has always been interested in cooking and food and wanted to work in this field.

Mathis

12 year old Mathis from Annecy dreams of selling luxury cars when he is older. He also has big plans to travel to Monte Carol and Los Angeles.
Clemence, a 15 year old college student from Switzerland asked some of her school friends their views on forced marriage and the role of women and men in society. She has always been very interested in social injustices and human rights and is a budding feminist!

J’ai demandé à des adolescents de 15 à 16 ans ce qu’ils pensaient des mariages forcés chez les jeunes filles de moins de 18 ans, et du rôle de la femme et de l’homme dans la société. L’avis général est que le rôle de la femme commence peu à peu à atteindre celui de l’homme et que c’est une excellente chose, bien qu’elle soit encore victime de discrimination. Pour les jeunes, la femme est égale à l’homme, et il est injuste de la considérer comme inférieure. Les femmes sont tout aussi capables de faire des métiers et des activités d’hommes et vice versa, il ne doit y avoir aucune limite, surtout pas de stéréotypes.

En ce qui concerne le mariage forcé, l’avis est très clair : les jeunes trouvent horrible voire inhumain de forcer quelqu’un à faire quelque chose contre son gré, surtout dans une décision aussi importante que le mariage. Les adolescents que j’ai interrogés étaient révoltés de savoir qu’aujourd’hui encore dans le monde, beaucoup de jeunes filles sont forcées à se marier très jeunes. Certains pensent que la femme ne pourra jamais s’épanouir ni donner un sens à sa vie à cause de cela, et que chaque être a le droit de décider avec qui il va vivre, peut importe qu’il ait plus ou moins de 18 ans.
Some facts about child rights

On 20 November 1989, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child which became the most rapidly and widely ratified international human rights treaty in history. Its importance lay in the way children are viewed, acknowledging them as human beings with a distinct set of rights. While a great deal has been achieved since the Convention was signed, from declining infant mortality to rising school enrolment, much remains to be done. Too many children still do not enjoy their full rights. Despite education being acknowledged as a major factor in social, economic and political progress, 69 million adolescents – in low-income countries – do not receive any education beyond primary school. Children are denied education because of unaffordable costs, gender discrimination, humanitarian crises and child labour. According to UNICEF, an estimated 168 million children aged 5 to 17 worldwide are working.

Other violations of children’s rights include the 15 million girls every year who are married as children, which denies them their right to a childhood, good health, education and life opportunities. Some girls are married as young as eight or nine. Moreover, girls who marry early also give birth at a younger age and have more children. Pregnancy and childbirth are amongst the main causes of death for girls aged from 15 to 19 in developing countries.

Female genital mutilation (FGM) is another violation of children’s rights which is mainly carried out on girls under the age of 15. According to the World Health Organisation, more than 125 million girls and women alive today in 29 countries in Africa and the Middle East, have been cut. The numbers of people displaced through conflict in the Middle East have increased twelve fold since the beginning of the crisis in 2011, with 12.2 million people in need of humanitarian assistance, including more than 5.6 million children. Conflicts are also ongoing in other parts of the world but receive less media attention.

The 2014 UNICEF study, Hidden in Plain Sight, estimates that around 120 million girls under the age of 20 (about 1 in 10) have been subjected to sexual violence at some point of their lives. This is not limited to girls as boys also report sexual violence, but to a lesser extent than girls. Millions more children risk exploitation in prostitution or pornography each year, often lured or forced into these situations through false promises and limited knowledge of the risks involved. Yet the true magnitude of sexual violence is hidden because it is sensitive and illegal. Every 10 minutes, somewhere in the world, an adolescent girl dies as a result of violence. Most children and families do not report cases of abuse and exploitation because of stigma, fear, and lack of trust in the authorities.

Nearly 230 million children under age 5 worldwide (about one in three) have never officially had their birth registered which is an obstacle to their right to a name and nationality. Almost half of the deaths of children under 5 years of age are due to undernutrition.

Whilst child rights still have a long way to go, global trends are moving in the right direction as the number of infant deaths has almost halved in the past 25 years. However much still needs to be done to allow children everywhere to enjoy their rights.
Some resources on children’s rights and human rights


Ayrton Senna Institute
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