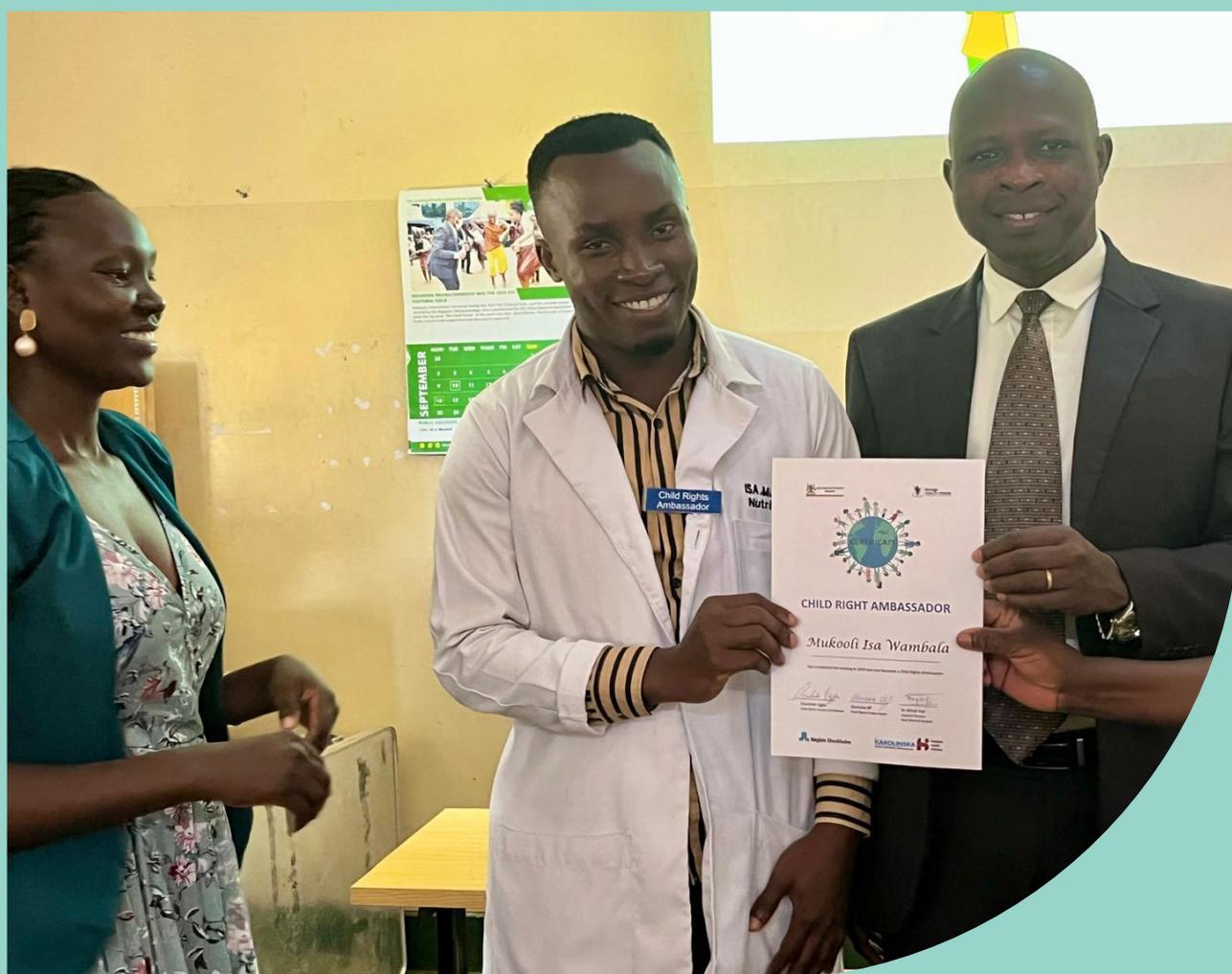# CHILD RIGHTS AMBASSADOR

Curriculum for Training Programme

Ceremonial presentation of certificate to newly appointed Child Rights Ambassador.
Photo: Tobias Svartserud

Foreword

The course content was originally developed for the training of child rights ambassadors whom we have educated at children's hospitals in Uganda. We wish to emphasize the importance of designing educational modules based on the specific context in which the training is taking place. Nevertheless, it is our hope that the content may serve as an inspiration for future training programmes for child rights ambassadors.

Partners:

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COURSE CONTENT OF THE CHILD RIGHTS AMBASSADOR TRAINING PROGRAM

MODULES 1-5

MODULE 1: COUNTRY COMMITMENT

It presents the policy documents that form the foundation of the country's child rights work, with a primary focus on the Convention on the Rights of the Child. It also addresses how traditions and customs may influence children's rights. This module should be facilitated as a full day, in person training with lectures, discussions and group exercises.

SESSION 1:

INTRODUCTION OF CONVENTION OF THE RIGHT OF THE CHILD

CONTENTS:

- **The history of the Convention of the right of the child, CRC:** The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child was adopted in 1989 after decades of international work to recognise children as rights-holders. It built on earlier declarations and growing global consensus that children de serve special protection and participation. Today, it is the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history.

- **The four core principals of the CRC:** Non-discrimination, Best interests of the child, The right to survival and development and The views of the child.

- **The different perspectives:** The child perspective, The child's perspective and The child rights perspective: The child perspective reflects an adult's interpretation of a child's needs, while the child's perspective centres on the child's own experiences and views. The child rights perspective provides a rights-based framework that ensures children's voices are respected in decisions affecting them.

- **Which articles are particularly relevant to the workplace where we encounter children?**
  In workplaces where staff regularly meet children, the Convention highlights the duty to act in the child's best interests, treat all children equitably, and ensure their safety and wellbeing. It also stresses the importance of listening to children's views and taking them seriously in decisions that affect them.

GOAL:
To introduce the convention of the right of the child (CRC) and its core principles.

INDICATOR:
Participants understand the four core principles of the CRC and is to some extent familiar with the whole convention. Participants understand ratified states obligation to fulfill the CRC.

ACTIVITY:
Lecture

SESSION 2:

ADDITIONAL POLICY DOCUMENTS ADOPTED IN THE COUNTRY

CONTENTS:

Presentation of additional policy documents in the country where this training takes place, addressing children´s rights: Many states have developed complementary policy frameworks, laws, and action plans that build on the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

For example:
- Sweden: Since 2020, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child has been incorporated into national law, making children's rights legally binding in all areas of governance.
- Uganda: The National Child Policy 2020 provides a framework to promote, protect, and fulfil children's rights, ensuring coordinated action across government and society.

GOAL:
Raised awareness on additional policy documents adapted in the country – what do they say?

INDICATOR:
All participants participate in active discussions on national child rights policy frameworks.

ACTIVITY:
Lecture and Discussion

SESSION 3:

MYTHS AND TRADITIONS

CONTENTS:

Lecture on how myths and traditions are seen in the country and how they can affect children´s rights: Myths and social norms can shape how children are perceived and treated, sometimes reinforcing discrimination or limiting their participation. They may hinder the recognition of children as rights-holders and create barriers to implementing child rights in practice.

GOAL:
Participants are able to reflect upon how traditions and myths can have an impact on their work to forward children´s rights.

INDICATOR:
Participants can reflect on their own presumptions or attitudes towards children, as well as discuss their society's view on children through a child rights lens.

ACTIVITY:
Group exercise and discussions (see example below).

Four corner exercise

You can prepare a set of statements reflecting common myths or norms about children and ask participants to move to the corner that best represents their view: Agree, Partly Agree, Disagree, Unsure. Afterwards, the group reflects on why they chose their position and relates it to child rights principles.

Example statements:

"Adults always know what is best for children."

"Children are too young to contribute meaningfully to decisions."

"Discipline must include punishment for children to learn."

"Boys and girls should be treated differently in certain situations."

MODULE 2: 5 FOCUS FIELDS

The right of the children can and should be safeguarded through multiple perspectives. In the second module we examine five distinct approaches, each of which holds a significant relevance to the field of children´s rights. In session 1, facilitated online, we look at key factors to map organisational competence in regards to Child Rights. Session 2 focuses on the significance of the environment for children and is an online lecture. Session 3 is an online lecture with connected peer to peer exercise in everyday work situation where participants pair up to observe and assist each other in practical implementation. Session 4 is an online lecture and discussion with a connected practical exercise for participants to perform in their workplace. Session 5 in a half day in person lecture and mapping/analysis exercise.

GOAL: Participants give example on how children´s rights can be developed in each of the 5-focus field.

SESSION 1:

ORGANISATION AND COMPETENCE

CONTENTS:

The structure of the organisation in which children are a part, can in many ways affect the level of fulfilment of child right´s. Three key factors help map out organisational competence:

- Current level of child rights knowledge and attitude among staff of all functions,
- Existence of training programs on child rights for staff,
- Existence of structures/routines for how caregivers should be invited to support their child when the child is in contact with the organisation.

GOAL:
To create awareness how the structure of an institution/hospital can affect the right of the child.

INDICATOR:
The participant can critically reflect on how organisational structures within the workplace may affect the implementation and protection of children´s rights.

ACTIVITY:
Online workshop

SESSION 2:

ENVIRONMENT

CONTENTS:

- **Child friendly environments:** A child friendly environment need to consider the need of all children.
- **Element for a welcoming environment:** Bright colours, child-sized furniture, friendly greetings, and visible child-friendly posters or symbols.
- **Areas for play and activities:** Age-appropriate toys, books, drawing materials, and interactive games available.
- **Safe areas – safe materials:** Rounded furniture edges, non-toxic materials, secure storage, and regular safety checks.
- **Areas for all children, including children with disabilities:** Ramps, wide doorways, adapted toilets, tactile materials, and inclusive play equipment.

GOAL:
Identify one facility/environment area which can be improved out of a CR-perspective.

INDICATOR:
Written task with suggestions of development handed in from each participant.

ACTIVITY:
Submission task

SESSION 3:

INFORMATION, UNDERSTANDING AND PARTICIPATION

CONTENTS:

For children to be able to participate fairly, we need to give them understandable information.
The session will focus upon:

- How we can provide information in a way that will be understandable/accessible for the child – Use a child adapted language, short sentences, visual aids, and examples from everyday life.

- What kind of additional tools can be used – Pictures, story cards, role play, translation, and digital tools adapted for children.

- How we can secure that a child has understood information – Ask the child to explain in their own words, use follow-up questions, or check through drawings and activities.

- How can the child be invited to participate – Offer choices, ask for opinions, create child-friendly formats (like voting with stickers or raising hands), and acknowledge contributions.

GOAL:
Participants develop their methods to inform children. Participants develop their skills to work peer to peer with feedback and evaluation.

INDICATOR:
Pedagogical tools are available and used by participants in their everyday work.

ACTIVITY:
Online workshop and practical observation in work situations: 2 and 2 trainees working together with peer evaluation/support, taking turns to observe each other and discuss.

SESSION 4:

CHILDREN'S VOICES

CONTENTS:

There are many ways to collect children's voices. During this session we will present some methods which can be used. We will also highlight the importance of taking responsibility for the answers we get.

- How to conduct a Safety Walk – Children walk through the environment and point out where they feel safe or unsafe.
- Arranging experts' group of children – A selected group of children meet regularly to share views and give advice on specific issues.
- Surveys – Short, child-friendly questionnaires with clear questions and visual scales.
- "Idea Box" – A box where children can drop written or drawn suggestions, questions, or concerns.
- Dialogue here and now – Encourage spontaneous conversations and listen actively when children express their thoughts in daily interactions.

Shier's Pathways to Participation is a model developed by Harry Shier (2001) that describes different levels of how children can be involved in decision-making. It is often used to help organisations and professionals reflect on, and strengthen, child participation in practice. The session should also cover Shier's Pathways to participation.

The model has five levels:

- Children are listened to – Adults are open to hearing children's views.
- Children are supported in expressing their views – Adults provide encouragement and appropriate ways for children to share.
- Children's views are taken into account – What children say has an actual influence on decisions.
- Children are involved in decision-making processes – They participate alongside adults in shaping outcomes.
- Children share power and responsibility for decision-making – Adults and children make decisions together as equal partners.

At each level, Shier identifies three stages of commitment: openings (possibilities), opportunities (structures or resources in place), and obligations (formal responsibilities).

GOAL:
Participants understand the benefits of using children voices to develop their organisation and the services provided.

INDICATOR:
Participants understand Shier's model and can reflect on their own and their organisations capacity to enable children's participation.

ACTIVITY:
Online lecture and Written submission task describing the method chosen and the results of the interaction.

SESSION 5:

RIGHTS

CONTENTS:

- **Legal considerations when promoting children's rights in public sector organisations:** Organisations must comply with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and relevant national laws, ensuring non-discrimination, the best interests of the child, protection, and participation. This also includes adhering to confidentiality rules and data protection regulations, mandatory reporting duties in cases of abuse or neglect, and respecting children's privacy and informed consent. Together, these legal and ethical duties safeguard children's rights while guiding professional practice.

- **Importance of an action plan for implementation:** An action plan translates legal obligations into concrete steps within the organisation. It clarifies responsibilities, sets measurable goals, and ensures that staff know how to apply children's rights in daily practice, creating accountability and sustainable change.

GOAL:
Children's rights are ensured at all levels and legal and ethical duties safeguard children's rights and guides professional practice. An action plan for developing children's rights is available.

INDICATOR:
Children's rights are visibly promoted within the institution/organisation, for example through posters. Protocol exists for handling situations where there is knowledge or suspicion that a child is being harmed, as well as an incident reporting system in place.

ACTIVITY:
Lecture for participants. Identification of level of development at own institution. Meeting between course facilitators/responsible team and organisations administration for planning of action plan.

MODULE 3: CHILDREN IN SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

CONTENTS:

Article 2: All children are entitled to the same rights. This module highlights the diversity within the target group and the challenges faced by particularly vulnerable children. Module 3 is facilitated as a half day, in person workshop.

SESSION 1:

VIOLENCE AGAINST CHILDREN

CONTENTS:

- **Types and contributing factors of violence against children:** Includes physical, emotional, and sexual violence, neglect, and exploitation. Contributing factors can be poverty, harmful social norms, lack of awareness, weak protection systems, or power imbalances between adults and children.

- **Consequences of violence against children:** Leads to physical injury, trauma, poor mental health, disrupted education, mistrust of adults, and long-term impacts on development and wellbeing.

- **Guiding principles and roles of the CRAs in Violence Against Children-prevention and response:** Uphold the best interests of the child, non-discrimination, participation, and protection. CRAs (Child Rights Advocates/Actors) are responsible for raising awareness, monitoring risks, reporting cases, supporting victims, and ensuring safe and child-friendly referral pathways.

GOAL:
Children exposed for violence, receive protection and support.

INDICATOR:
The participants act on the guiding principles and roles of the CRAs in violence prevention and response.

ACTIVITY:
Lecture and Discussions.

SESSION 2:

CHILDREN WITH PSYCOLOGICAL DISABILITIES

CONTENTS:

Understanding children's mental health is essential for promoting their rights and wellbeing, as it highlights both the challenges they may face and the actions needed to ensure support, inclusion, and protection.

- What is mental health – A state of wellbeing where a child can cope with stress, learn, build relationships, and participate in daily life.
- What is mental illness – Conditions that affect a child's thinking, emotions, or behaviour in ways that limit daily functioning and wellbeing.
- What are the causes of mental illness among children – Can include genetic factors, trauma, abuse, neglect, poverty, bullying, or lack of supportive relationships.
- What are the common mental disorders among children – Anxiety, depression, PTSD.
- What are the common challenges faced by children living with mental disability – Stigma, discrimination, exclusion from school or play, lack of access to treatment, and limited understanding from adults.
- How can these challenges be addressed by a child rights ambassador – By promoting awareness, fighting stigma, supporting inclusive environments, advocating for services, and ensuring children's voices and rights are respected in care and education.

GOAL:
Children's mental health and conditions for having good mental health are included in organisational priorities.

INDICATOR:
Participants understand key factors that influence a child's mental health.

ACTIVITY:
Lecture and discussions.

SESSION 3:

CHILDREN WHO HAVE SUFFERED SEXUAL ABUSE

CONTENTS:

Staff working with children's rights need to develop specific knowledge and sensitivity when supporting children who have been sexually abused, in order to avoid re-traumatisation and ensure effective protection. Key factors include:

- Understanding trauma and its impact – Recognising how sexual abuse can affect a child's behaviour, emotions, trust, and sense of safety.
- Confidentiality and safeguarding duties – Knowing how to handle sensitive disclosures, when to maintain confidentiality, and when reporting obligations apply.
- Child-centred communication – Using safe, age-appropriate, and non-leading language, giving the child space and time to share without pressure.
- Recognising signs of abuse – Being able to identify behavioural and physical indicators that may suggest ongoing or past abuse.
- Creating safe environments – Ensuring that the child feels secure, respected, and believed, and that procedures minimise further exposure to harm.
- Referral and support systems – Understanding how to connect children with specialised services such as medical care, counselling, and legal support.
- Non-discrimination and dignity – Treating each child with respect regardless of background, avoiding blame, and supporting empowerment.

GOAL:
Awareness about children who are sexual abused leads to: Use of privacy measures, staff recognising signs of abuse and using existing report- and referral support systems.

INDICATOR:
Participants can list signs of abuse and reflect on how trauma can impact children's behaviour, emotions and sense of safety. Participants knows how to report suspected sexual abuse, and work to break stigma for victims.

ACTIVITY:
Lecture and discussions.

SESSION 4:

CHILDREN WITH NEUROLOGICAL DISABILITIES

CONTENTS:

- **Neurological disability; definition and examples:** Conditions affecting the brain, spinal cord, or nerves that impact movement, learning, behaviour, or communication. Examples include epilepsy, cerebral palsy, autism spectrum disorder, and developmental delay.

- **Rights of a person with neurological disability:** Equal access to healthcare, education, participation, and protection from discrimination, in line with the UNCRC and national disability laws.

- **Case scenario:** A child with epilepsy faces stigma at school; staff and peers need awareness training, reasonable adjustments, and supportive policies to ensure inclusion and respect for the child's rights.

GOAL:
A reduce of stigma is seen towards children with neuropsychiatric disabilities.

INDICATOR:
Staff are acting like role models and actively spread proper information regarding this group of children to guardians, teachers and other people of the civil society.

ACTIVITY:
Lecture and discussions.

MODULE 4: IMPORTANCE OF PLAY

The module gives a comprehensive understanding of child development—both in general and in relation to play and enables the participants to make informed and appropriate selections of educational materials, tailored to the child's developmental stage and individual circumstances.

Module 4 is facilitated as a full day, in person workshop.

SESSION 1:

PEDAGOGICAL APPROACH

CONTENTS:

- **What characterises a good educator:** An educator who listens actively, shows respect, adapts to each child's needs, encourages participation, and creates a safe and inclusive learning environment.
- **The didactic triangle:** A model showing the relationship between the child, the educator, and the content, emphasising that effective learning happens through interaction and balance between all three elements.

GOAL:
Participants receive awareness of how a pedagogical approach can assist in application of children's rights, save time and make the working environment better.

INDICATOR:
Participants understand the relationship between the child, the professional and the sontent that the child is supposed to understand. Participants can reflect on their own behaviour as forwarding or countering a safe environment where children can process information and participate.

ACTIVITY:
Drama of different situations, based of children's age and cognitive level.

SESSION 2:

MATERIAL/AGE APPROPRIATE

CONTENTS:

- **What factors should be taken into account in the selection of play materials:** Materials should be safe, age-appropriate, inclusive, culturally relevant, durable, and support both learning and creativity.

- **Play when resources of play material are limited: Encourage** imagination through simple, low-cost or recycled items, group activities, storytelling, and games that require little or no equipment.

GOAL:
Children and young people are offered age-appropriate play and activity material based on their individual needs.

INDICATOR:
The participants demonstrate, through their selection of play materials, a well-founded understanding of the specific needs of different children.

ACTIVITY:
Examples, discussions. Production of own material.

SESSION 3:

IMPORTANCE OF PLAY

CONTENTS:

- **Play – why necessary for a child?** Play supports learning, creativity, social skills, emotional expression, and overall healthy development.
- **Play in different settings:** Play can take place at home, in schools, in healthcare environments, or in the community, and should always be adapted to the child's age, needs, and context.

GOAL:
The participants exhibit, both theoretically and practically, a nuanced awareness of the fundamental role of play in children's development and actively uphold and advocate for this right as essential to the well-being of the child.

INDICATOR:
Session of play, encouraged and arranged by the staff, is seen more commonly in the organisation after trining.

ACTIVITY:
Examples, discussions. Production of own material.

SESSION 4:

PLAY OVERALL AND UNDER SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

CONTENTS:

- **Play for children in vulnerable situations:** Play offers comfort, reduces stress, builds resilience, and helps children process difficult experiences when facing trauma or difficulties.

- **How to play in places like hospitals, social services, or other municipal settings:** Use safe and flexible activities such as drawing, storytelling, role play, soft toys, or simple games, always adapted to the child's health, emotional state, and context.

GOAL:
The participants demonstrate an informed understanding of the particular significance of play for children experiencing vulnerable or adverse circumstances.

INDICATOR:
Play and activity is seen as integral components of the support provided to children who have experienced crisis or who are living in particularly vulnerable circumstances.

ACTIVITY:
Lecture, discussions.

MODULE 5: PRACTICUM

During the practical part of the training, the participant is observed using the self-assessment checklist (Appendix 2). As a part of the final assignment, participants are also required to collect children´s voices on a topic of their choosing, relevant to their own professional setting.

Module 5 is facilitated by participants being subjected to observation by a colleague or manager in their every day work, evaluating and practicing putting new knowledge and skills into action to forward children's right. Module 5 also consists of a written task and the course graduation ceremony (not included in the time estimation for the curriculum).

SESSION 1:

INTRODUCTION TO COLLECTING CHILDREN'S VOICES.

CONTENTS:

Looking back on Module 2, Session 4 on collecting children's voices, we are now going to put that knowledge into practice in an exercise to enable child participation. This requires us to consider:

- Advantages and challenges of the different child participation methods – Reflect on what each method makes possible, and where limitations may arise.
- Planning for the selection of children – Ensure diversity, fairness, and representation when inviting children to take part.
- Parental consent – Address ethical and legal requirements by securing informed consent from parents or guardians.
- Factors to consider – Pay attention to age, ability, background, and context to ensure meaningful and safe participation for all children.

GOAL:
Participants can identify, for the situation, suitable methods to collect children´s voices

INDICATOR:
Participants manage to conduct the collecting, following the guide

ACTIVITY:
Repetition of Module 2, session 4. Presentation on different methods like; Safety walk, experts group, surveys, one-to-one talk.

SESSION 2:

SUPERVISED PRACTICUM

CONTENTS:

Before graduation an observation is carried out over approximately one hour based on previously presented checklist. The observation is followed by a reflection dialogue, questions included in the checklist material.

GOAL:
Participants show, by their own approach towards the child, that they have understood the contents of the checklist.

INDICATOR:
Participants show awareness on how to act in a child friendly way, when children are met.

ACTIVITY:
Presentation of self-assessment list, drama to show examples.

SESSION 3:

PRESENT TASK FROM COLLECTING CHILDREN'S VOICE. WRITERN TASK.

CONTENTS:

The participants present their work with child participation.
The written report on the assignment "Collecting children´s voices" should include:

- Which question have you used?
- How many children have you selected according to the categories below?
- Ages?
- Gender?
- Children with disabilities?
- What type of disability?
- Summaries the result
- How will you provide the children who participated with feedback on how you will handle their input?
- What is your conclusion from performing this task?

GOAL:
Children´s voices are heard and lead to changes.

INDICATOR:
Participants have knowledge about different participatory methods and of how to enable children's fair participation.

ACTIVITY:
Group presentation and final course graduation ceremony.

Notes