

# Module 1 Unit 2

This is a **OPTIONAL READING**.

Kolucki, B. & Lemish, D. (2011). Part One: Why Children, Why Communication? In *Communicating with children: Principles and practices to nurture, inspire, excite, educate and heal*. New York, NY: UNICEF.

# Communicating with Children



*Principles and Practices to Nurture,  
Inspire, Excite, Educate and Heal*



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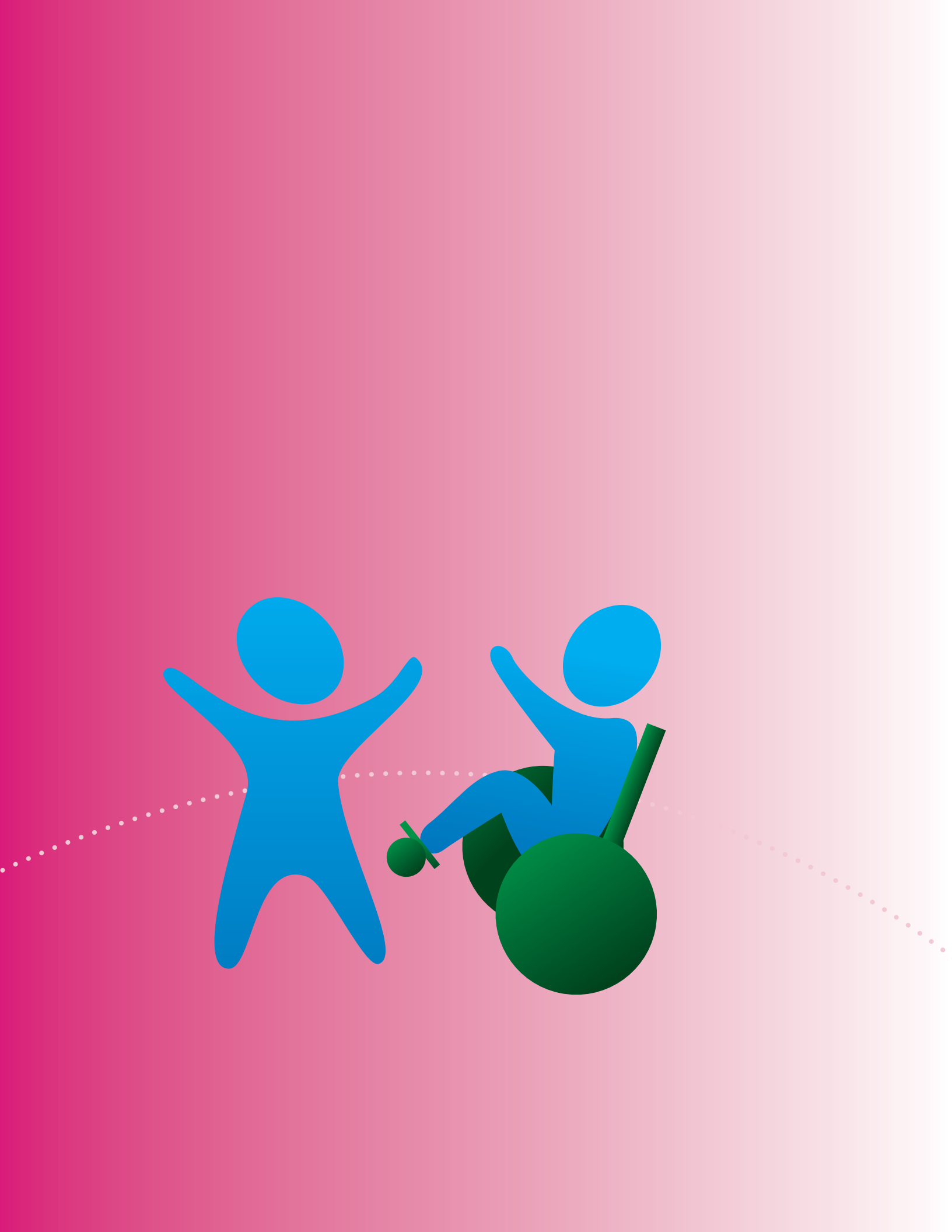
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# Part One

*Why Children, Why Communication?*





## Children Are Full Human Beings in Their Own Right

Children and young people occupy a very unique time in the human cycle that deserves our special attention, and the best of our resources and investments. They are the major “social capital” of every society concerned with change for a better today and for the future of its members: Their education promises the chance of improving economic and social conditions; their positive socialization for conflict resolution can help manage social clashes; their health and good nutrition can promote longevity, lower social costs and lead to a better quality of life; and their psychological well-being has the promise of a more resilient and culturally rich society. Most parents hope that their children will have a better quality of life than they have, and most of them work hard towards achieving this goal. The 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) ([www.unicef.org/crc/](http://www.unicef.org/crc/)) reminds us that children are full human beings in their own right, who deserve the best that life can provide at every single stage of their development.

*Most children are capable of responding to positive communication, and of developing to their full potential.*

Children and young people, however, are not a homogenous group. At the beginning of the third millennium, children are being raised in a great variety of social arrangements, facing very different challenges in their daily lives. They have different dreams and aspirations for their futures. Many children in the world today do not live in an environment where they are protected by a loving family or can exercise their right to go to school. Others have had to deal with unimaginable situations and catastrophes as well as extremely difficult daily lives. They have experienced trauma, discrimination, suffering, atrocities and abuse and have responsibilities well beyond their years <http://www.unicef.org/rightsite/sowc>. Despite this, most children are capable of responding to positive communication, and of developing to their full potential.

## Children’s Communication Rights

This document is specifically concerned with the role communication plays in improving the lives of children worldwide. How can communication help children, especially the most disadvantaged and



vulnerable, to survive, develop and thrive? How can communicating with children bridge generational and cultural divides and help reach the goals of social development?

The rights of children, as delineated in the CRC, include a variety of communication rights: the right to be heard and to be taken seriously; to free speech and to information; to maintain privacy; to develop cultural identity; and to be proud of one's heritage and beliefs. Yet, whether girls and boys live in deprived and resource-poor societies, or in overwhelmingly commercialized and profit-driven ones, their voices need to be heard and taken seriously; the possibility for expressing their needs and opinions and their access to important information should be expanded. Communication efforts need to respect children's privacy and dignity and foster their self-esteem and confidence. Where efforts are made to provide children a "voice," it must be more than a token attempt that reflects the perspective of adults: it should support their holistic development or problem-solving skills.

Rather than thinking of children as little people who are in the process of becoming fully grown adults, many global child development experts suggest that we think of them as full human beings in their own right: We need to fully recognize children, in each stage of their development, as having unique needs and skills, as well as personal voices that deserve to be listened to with respect and empathy.



For example, it is not enough to have children appear in television or radio programmes, book illustrations, posters, or another forms of media in order to make the materials “child-friendly”. Messages need to be tailored for the specific child audience, and have to include their needs, perspectives and points of view in order to relate to them in effective and helpful ways. The accumulated knowledge from years of studying children and media demonstrates that children are active users of media: They react to, think, feel and create their own meanings out of them. They bring to their media encounters a host of predispositions, abilities, desires and experiences. They watch television or listen to stories in diverse personal, social and cultural circumstances that also influence what they get out of the experience. We must never assume that what we as adults need and take from media (such as television programmes, magazine articles, oral stories, card games, posters), is the same as what children will get out of it.

### *Children’s Diverse Media Environments*

Children also differ in the access they have to different forms of media, such as books and magazines, radio, television, computers, Internet, music-players and mobile phones. In some war and disaster-affected areas, children may have no access to any form of media whatsoever. Most specifically, the digital inequalities that characterize our world today confront us with a wide variety of challenges: While some

