World Children's Day 2026: 'My day, my rights, my future'

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News

The UN's Universal (World) Children's Day is observed every year on 20 November; it is different from India's Children's Day (14 November). It marks the dates on which the UN General Assembly adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1959) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC, 1989). UNICEF's 2026 theme is 'Children are speaking up: My day, my rights, my future'; under it, children share their ideas about their lives, rights and futures. UNICEF has urged leaders and businesses to 'choose a future for children'. Children's views on privacy, safety and inclusion in artificial intelligence (AI) are being gathered for a 'Children's Manifesto on Child Rights and AI'. 'Kids' takeovers' of roles in media, politics and sport, and 'Go Blue' events lighting landmarks in blue, are held. About 190 countries take part each year (UNICEF).

Key facts for the exam

Point	Details
Date	20 November – UN World Children's Day (India's Children's Day – 14 Nov)
2026 theme	'My day, my rights, my future'
Banner	'Children are speaking up'; 'Choose a future for children'
1924	Geneva Declaration – League of Nations; drafted by Eglantyne Jebb
1959 / 1989	Declaration / Convention on the Rights of the Child – 20 Nov

Point	Details
Optional Protocols	2000 – children in armed conflict, sale of children; 2011 – complaints procedure
Non-ratifier	USA – the only UN member not to ratify the UNCRC
UNICEF	Created by the UN General Assembly in 1946
2026 activities	AI Children's Manifesto; kids' takeovers; Go Blue; ~190 countries

Background

- History of child rights: In 1924 the League of Nations adopted the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child, drafted by Eglantyne Jebb, founder of Save the Children. In 1946 the UN General Assembly created UNICEF. The 1959 Declaration of the Rights of the Child covered rights to education, play, a supportive environment and health care; the legally binding UNCRC followed in 1989.
- UNCRC: Defining every person below 18 as a 'child', it is the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history. Two Optional Protocols in 2000 cover children in armed conflict and the sale and sexual exploitation of children; a 2011 protocol created a 'communications procedure' for complaints to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. It has 196 States parties; the USA, which signed it, is the only UN member that has not ratified it.
- Indian Constitution: Article 15(3) allows special laws for women and children. Article 39(f), a Directive Principle (reworded by the 42nd Amendment, 1976), directs the State to give children opportunities to develop in a healthy manner in freedom and dignity, and to protect childhood and youth against exploitation and moral and material abandonment. Article 45 covers early childhood care and education below age six.

Tamil Nadu link: Tamil Nadu's Cradle Baby Scheme, begun in 1992 to curb female infanticide, was first launched in Salem district; reception centres were extended to Dharmapuri, Dindigul, Madurai and Theni in 2001, and to Ariyalur, Cuddalore, Perambalur, Tiruvannamalai and Villupuram in 2011 (DT Next).

Frequently asked questions

What is this news about?

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What are the key facts to remember for the exam?

Date: 20 November – UN World Children's Day (India's Children's Day – 14 Nov); 2026 theme: 'My day, my rights, my future'; Banner: 'Children are speaking up'; 'Choose a future for children'; 1924: Geneva Declaration – League of Nations; drafted by Eglantyne Jebb.

What is the background to this news?

History of child rights: In 1924 the League of Nations adopted the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child, drafted by Eglantyne Jebb, founder of Save the Children.

Practice questions (with answers)

1. Which is the only UN member State that has not ratified the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child?

A) Somalia

B) South Sudan

C) India

D) USA

Answer: D – Explanation: USA – it signed but never ratified; 196 States are parties. It is the most widely ratified human rights treaty in history.

2. What does the 2011 Optional Protocol to the UN Child Rights Convention provide for?

A) Complaints to CRC panel

B) Ban on child marriage

C) Ban on child soldiers

D) Free schooling

Answer: A – Explanation: A communications procedure – the CRC Committee can receive and probe complaints. Child soldiers and sale of children are the 2000 protocols.

3. Which Article directs the State to give children chances to develop healthily and protect them from exploitation?

A) Article 15(3)

B) Article 45

C) Article 39(f)

D) Article 47

Answer: C – Explanation: Article 39(f) – a Directive Principle (42nd Amendment, 1976). 15(3) allows special laws for women and children; 47 – nutrition and health.

4. Who drafted the 1924 Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child, adopted by the League of Nations?

A) Eleanor Roosevelt

B) Eglantyne Jebb

C) Janusz Korczak

D) Maria Montessori

Answer: B – Explanation: Eglantyne Jebb – founder of Save the Children (Britain). UNICEF was created in 1946; the UN Declaration came in 1959.

5. Tamil Nadu's Cradle Baby Scheme (1992), against female infanticide, was first launched in which district?

A) Madurai

B) Dharmapuri

C) Salem

D) Theni

Answer: C – Explanation: Salem. Reception centres were added in Dharmapuri, Dindigul, Madurai and Theni in 2001, and in five more districts in 2011.

Sources: UNICEF; DT Next. © Shanmugam IAS Academy.