

RIGHTS OF CHILDREN POLICY

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PREAMBLE

Children are the foundation of the future but remain one of the most vulnerable segments of the population. It is the responsibility of society to evolve comprehensive policy programmes for them. United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC, 1989), is the cornerstone of cultural, civil, political, economic, educational and social rights for children, along with governments' responsibility to protect these rights. According to the World Health Organisation, more than one in every four deaths of children under five is directly or indirectly related to environmental risks, and children are among the first victims of adverse environmental effects including droughts, floods, storms, food crises and pollution. A child rights policy should be inclusive, ensuring it covers all children, including those with disabilities, refugees, climate migrants, or in conflict zones, and it should outline clear mechanisms for monitoring and accountability.

VISION

Our Green Vision is a world where all children's rights are respected and their upbringing enables them to realize their potential, from a safe birth into thriving under the nurturing care of parents. All children – regardless of who they are, or where they come from – can grow up with the same rights: to education, health and opportunities to take part in and contribute towards their communities, protected from violence, abuse and exploitation. A socially just world of equality for all children; access to opportunities in every stage of life, and grounded on respect.

OBJECTIVE

The Greens will support and promote children's cultural, physical, social, mental and psychological development and rights. We will work on a strength-based approach, we strive to create a world where children's voices are heard, where their needs determine their paths, and where their potential is channeled into opportunities. Therefore, the Greens endorse -

- Children should be free to play, interact, grow and flourish in safe and nurturing environments.
- In all dimensions of a child's life, especially education, prioritise best values, and enable children to appreciate and respect the rights other people.
- Promote high quality children's development and provide them with a safe environment in which to grow; implement best child care and early childhood education programmes; ensure targeted financial investment for best services; and in addition, ensure equal access to all provisions, with targeted programmes for the most vulnerable children.
- Advocate and enshrine laws and policies to create loving and nurturing environments that are free of physical, emotional and sexual abuse, neglect, exploitation and discrimination
- Eradicate child poverty, social exclusion, child trafficking, child labour and slavery; and reduce greenhouse gas emissions to combat the negative effects of climate change on children.
- Ensure high quality childhood experiences, with safe and nurturing homes and communities that are free from fear, violence and abuse.

The interests of children will be prioritised at all levels of political and government planning and policy-making. Children will also be included in the development of plans and strategies that affect them. Therefore, the Greens will –

ACTION PLAN

Endorse guarantees of Universal Access to Education

- Provide each and every child an education, free from birth through adulthood, regardless of station or circumstances.
- Develop inclusive education systems for children with disabilities, special needs, escaping from conflict zones, displaced by climate change, or living in marginalized communities.
- Support lifetime learning skills that will enable children and young people to thrive at every stage of their lives.

Rights, Needs and Interests

- Legislate that children's rights, needs, and interests are prioritised at all levels of political and government planning and policy-making
- Involve children in the development of plans and strategies that affect them
- Ensure that children from diverse ethnic groups and communities are involved in the development of plans and strategies that affect them
- Develop policies at all levels of government addressing the special needs of children from diverse groups and communities

Safety and Security

- Support and advocate for policies that increase children's safety and security in their communities.
- Take measures to protect children from all forms of violence, abuse, and neglect.
- Take measures to protect children from the negative impact of climate change and environmental health risks.
- Protect migrant children from trauma and exploitation.

School and Education

- Pursue education reforms that reduce class sizes and broaden curricula to include sport, culture, environment and human rights.
- Create opportunities to learn and develop inside and outside of school.
- Ensure that every child has the opportunity to access quality education until 18 years of age.
- Ensure that children's formal education does not come at the expense of their development outside of school, recognising the value of learning and growth outside of the classroom.

Access to Public Places and Physical Activities

- Ensure that children have access to safe and friendly public spaces.
- Ensure that children have a wide range of affordable indoor and outdoor activities in the fields of sports, music, arts and culture.
- Create quality outdoor green spaces in recognition of their necessity for healthy physical, psychological and social development.
- Provide and encourage children to participate in co-curricular activities at school.

- Encourage and support parents and caregivers to promote children’s physical activity and healthy exercise.

Social and Emotional Development

- Adopt measures ensuring that children’s right to a loving and nurturing environment free of physical, emotional and sexual abuse, neglect, exploitation and discrimination.
- Implement funding programmes, service delivery and decisions regarding child protection consistent with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.
- Create policies and programmes that support children’s social and emotional development
- Remove restrictions that arbitrarily segregate children, such as on the basis of sex, religion, and class, and support initiatives promoting inclusion and diversity.
- Encourage parents and caregivers to be active contributors and role models in their children’s physical, mental, social and emotional development.
- Create supportive and enabling environments for children to express themselves to their community and at all levels of government.

Equitable Access to Resources

- Ensure that children have equitable access to resources, education and opportunities for personal growth, lifelong learning, and participation in decision making about their lives.
- Create mechanisms that ensure the needs of children are taken into account by those involved in developing and implementing policies that affect them.
- Enact measures ensuring that all children have access to appropriate services regardless of socio-economic or other factors.
- Legislate for paid parental leave for up to 12 months and the ability of parents and caregivers to negotiate flexible working arrangements with their employers.
- Actively monitor child poverty.
- Reform and provide greater investment in child welfare services.
- Establish a universal child payment, unlinked from employment or other requirements.

Health

- Provide adequate funding for children's health services, particularly for addressing mental health, suicide, drug and substance use, sexual and reproductive health, disability or special care and protection needs.
- Ensure promotion of healthy food, including a ban on junk food advertising on television.
- Ensure that healthy and safe food is available in schools.
- Provide facilities for mothers to breastfeed.
- Ensure access to free high quality healthcare, including prenatal, antenatal and early childhood care.

Justice

- Develop and implement strategies to keep children out of the criminal justice system, and reduce the risk of reoffending.
- Ensure that child imprisonment is an absolute last resort for children who have committed serious violent or dangerous offences, noting existing and potential new alternatives to imprisonment.
- Create a national child affairs apex body with elected and representative members.
- Create well-funded high-quality services for child survivors of abuse and neglect.
- Take measures to address the sexualisation of children in media and advertising.

Children and Climate Mobility, Displacement and Relocation

- Prioritise the Child's best interests in all decisions, including climate-related mobility policies, plans, and legal proceedings, whether for planned relocation, disaster displacement, or cross-border movement.
- Ensure child-sensitive planned relocation and movement in government-led and agency-led relocations, including, conducting child-rights impact assessments to ensure new locations are safe, provide access to clean water, sanitation, healthcare, and education, and protect children from exploitation and violence in the temporary or new environment.
- Guarantee continuous and inclusive education of all children in climate movement by establishing and funding emergency education programs during displacement, ensuring seamless integration into local schools in new locations; and providing psychosocial support and adapting curricula for displaced and traumatized children.
- Provide specialized protection and psychosocial support to children by: [a] creating safe spaces for children in displacement settings and relocation sites; staffing with trained professionals to address trauma, anxiety, and loss; and strengthening child protection systems to prevent family separation, trafficking, child labor, and gender-based violence.
- Uphold the Child's Right to Nationality and legal identity by preventing statelessness for children displaced across borders due to climate impacts, including when entire territories are lost; ensuring birth registration; and providing legal documentation to guarantee Children's access to rights and services.

References

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