



Learning Circles Children's Rights - June 2017
Selection of 5 winning letters to the jury of GTP and UNICEF

Individual assignment in peerScholar:

The jury of the Global Teenager Project has launched a 'writing contest' that allows you as LC-participant to speak out and raise your voice.

We ask you to write a paper titled: **"My plan to improve Children's Rights"**

Length about 500 words, addressed to the jury of GTP.

Include in your letter:

- A brief personal introduction, so the jury understands who you are and where you're from.
- Your lessons learned and eye-openers during the Learning Circle process.
- Design a plan to improve at least one Children's Right. How can your plan improve the conditions in the lives of children?

1. South Africa

My plan to improve children's rights

I am a fourteen year old African girl, who comes from an unknown township in South Africa. Many know me as that girl that comes from the Oprah Winfrey Leadership Academy but many disregard where I come from and how my life was before I came to the academy. My kind of background didn't really allow me to dream big or even think much of myself or where I would end up in life. My dreams were ignored and seemed to be impossible to achieve. I personally feel like in many parts of the world children are suppressed and not given all the necessary equipment to develop as both individuals and global citizens. When I started with Learning circle, I had the mentality that I knew all about children's rights but it never hit me that I could actually be taking the rights that I am privileged to have for granted. I never thought much of children's rights and how they are and aren't implemented in some parts of the world. With all the discussions, research and activities, I have learnt that many things fall into being the building blocks of a child's development and future. I have also learnt that children's rights are some of the important factors that affect how the child develops, grows and that children's rights are not the same in all countries. I also learnt that some exploitation of children's rights is lead to by the situation in that child's life, and an example of that is poverty.

A part of me has doubts on what a fourteen year old girl like me could possibly do to improve children's rights and another part of me believes that as young as I am, I can make a difference not only in my life but also in the lives of others.

My plan does not include me publishing a book or advertising the importance of children's rights but it is simply a plan where I stand up and speak out. I firstly plan on acknowledging and being grateful for the rights that I have. I will see the importance of rights and how many others are deprived of even their basic rights. The next step of my plan is to educate myself and those around me about children's rights and how important they are. I want to be like Malala and voice out how I feel about the exploitation of children's rights. I want to speak up about children's rights. With me speaking out, I hope that the least that can happen is for someone to hear my plead. All I would possibly want is to be heard by others who want to make a difference.

My plan also includes me either forming or being a part of an organisation that evaluates and re-edits children's rights in my country. With that being done, hopefully the suggestions and plans made by the organisation will be further passed on to the government officials and a way forward can be paved from that. I think that that my plan does not focus on just one children's right because I feel like all children's rights should be put in the spot light and treated equally. I say this because children's rights are like a puzzle and if one piece is missing that means that the puzzle has an empty space and is incomplete.

Speaking about this will raise awareness to people around me and having an organisation that deals with children's rights will lead to the government and other citizens being more cautious about children's rights and try to improve existing rights and implement new ones. At this point, all I could ever want is to make an impact in another child's life. I don't really know how my plan will change the lives of other children but I know that it will touch someones life, inspire someone and make a difference in someone's life in one way or the other.

My plan only focuses on my country, and that is because I believe that everything has to start small. My plan is to be implemented in my country and spread across it and because such things are contagious, I believe that some aspects of it will be considered and developed in other countries.

I will not lie and claim that I have formulated an award-winning plan to change the lives of millions but what I do know for sure is that this plan, if initiated can make a difference in my life and the lives of those around me. I believe that I can make a difference and all I need to do is to actually stand up and do something.

Felicity Nosipho Makalima

2. The Netherlands

Dear members of the jury of the Global Teenager Project,

My name is Senna Beumer, I'm 14 years old and I live in the Netherlands.

When we started with the Learning Circles I was impressed about the fact that we were going to do this in association with other countries. Even though I wondered how Gambia was going to do this, because it's generally known that their school facilities are not that good. Right now I sit in my room, behind my desk, typing on my laptop. In Gambia, they don't have a laptop. I complain when it's raining, or when I have to eat something that I do not like. But when I think about it, I don't have anything to complain or worry about. Conclusion: my children's rights are how they're supposed to be.

Children's rights: What exactly does that mean? Before we started with this project, I was familiar with what that means. But I didn't know enough, so I gathered some information and found a list of the most important children's rights. When I read through the list, there was one right that remained in my mind. Protecting against child labor. Especially in Asia and Africa, child labour is kind of accepted in their society, mostly in factories and weaving mills. It's common known that a lot of clothes are made by children, they have to work way too long, and earns like 5 cents in one hour, which is exploitation. There are people who know about clothes being made by children but they still buy the clothes. The problem seems far away, so people do not worry about it. Nevertheless, I think there can be such more improvement.

Firstly, I think there needs to be a law, which says that every store or brand needs to publish a (black) list from all their suppliers. Because of this, it's possible to check the factories. Which factories satisfy to the requirements, and which don't? When it's clear that some factories do use young children without giving them enough money, they need to change that immediately. After some time, they need to show what they've changed. Furthermore, it's important to set up some controls, combined with conversations with the employees. Beside that, we need to ask ourselves: Why does children labour exist? That's because their parents don't get enough money to live a normal life, so also their children need to work. For that reason, adults need to get more salary all around these place where child labour still exists. Finally, there need to be more education about child labour, especially in the factories themselves. Furthermore, I think more people need to be trained to detect and prevent child labour. I believe that there are enough volunteers from foreign countries who would love to help young children by giving them education (think about activity camps).

I enjoyed writing this, and I hope you enjoyed reading it.

Kind regards,

Senna Beumer

3. Canada

My name is Jessie Hau and I am a grade 9 student from Pierre Elliot Trudeau High School located in Markham, Canada. This is my third year living in Markham and it was the first year for me in high school. I come from Hong Kong I like to listen to music during my own time and I think reading can improve my temperament and self-cultivation. My favorite type of music is K-pop and I like to read romance novels. At school, I like geography class and English class. I live with my grandmother, my mom and my sister in Canada. My favorite place in the world is Canada and I hope I can visit Europe sometime during my life. In the future, I want to be a doctor and stay in Canada, my goal is to go to the University of Toronto. During my geography class, we read an article from the United Nations and started to get an idea of what children's rights are.

Our teacher first assigned a country to each of us and we did research about that specific country independently. After that, we did a presentation to share our idea and learned how different children's rights are being violated in different countries. Then, we discovered about child labour all around the world, especially the cocoa farms located in the Ivory Coast, where they kidnap children and force them to leave their homes and work on the farm. We also learned about fair trade, it is how people make sure there are no children working in the factory, they paid the workers fairly and protect the workers. I think this unit makes me develop a deep understanding of global issue happened around the world. Overall, I feel satisfied after learning about this unit.

As a human, it is part of our job to help those children who need help. I believe that if each one of us starts helping by doing little things, it can make a big different. First, if all the citizens refuse to buy the products from companies has child labour, the companies will start to realize that they must change their way of doing business or they will lose their business. Also, citizens need to choose their clothes very carefully because some uncertified companies may use child labour. We need to stop buying clothes from those companies and let the companies understand that they can not ignore the problem.

Companies need to communicate with the cloth factories to make sure there is no child labour and they need send people to the farm more often, so they can protect the child together. Instead of using child labour, companies need to hire adult workers only, but they need to pay the workers living wage and make sure all of them are safe. What they will do depends on how we react to this problem.

If everyone starts to agree to pay more money to buy things from certified companies, other companies will start to make changes also. The government must also do something to solve this problem. They can build some school that does not need to pay student fee so that the poor family can send the children to school. Each student must attend school until they are 16 years old. It is part of the job for governments to make sure kids in their countries are attending to school. The government will also need to make a law to make sure all the adult are working in a safe environment and they get pay a living wage, so they can support the whole family. We have to be aware of the issue that bothers the whole world right now because we are the one who can solve it.

4. Canada

My name is Janice, I am a grade nine student at Pierre Elliott Trudeau High School. I came to Canada from Hong Kong in the Summer of 2016. I have met a lot of friends here. I like Canada, because school is easier, which makes me relaxed and happy. In my free time, I like to play piano and guitar, also, I like to watch television. There are 5 people including me in my family, my mom, my dad, my brother, and my little dog. My lovely dog's name is Coco she is a little poodle we brought from Hong Kong. She has beautiful brown fur and a pair of shiny black eyes, she is very cute! My favourite place in Canada is Niagara Falls, I love the night view of Niagara Falls, because it is very dramatic and beautiful. My dream job is to be a veterinarian, because I like animals and I want to save them. I have a dream to be a veterinarian, but do all children have the right to dream their future job?

Children right is one of the topics we learned in class. Children right is the right that all of us have, the definition of children is when you born until 18. Children around the world all have this right. The first problem of the violation is child labour, there are a lot of children in the poor country got kidnapped to different kinds of factories to doing free work for the owner. One example is in the chocolate factory, children who got kidnapped from other country will travel countries to come to the chocolate factory to help the farmer with no paying for harvesting the cocoa, or other jobs to do in the factory. The second violation is safe home, according to UNICEF Canada's article 27 "You have the right to food, clothing, a safe place to live and to have your basic needs met. You should not be disadvantaged so that you can't do many of the things other kids can do." I have a warm and lovely home, you have a home that are full of love, but still, there are a lot of children lived in an unsafe home that are full of violence. Fair trade is one of the plan to protect children from doing child labour, fair trade is suggested by the union to protect the workers from unfair treatment. The three rules of fair trade is fair price is paid for the work done, child labour is not used, and workers health and safety are protected. If the company making chocolate can follow the rules, then they will get a sticker from the FLO.

We all can help to save children from doing child labour. Governments can build more Child Free Zones in the poor countries such as Ivory Coast and Ghana. Child Free Zones can educate the children and let them have a chance to get a better job in the future. Also, the government can check factories at any time and not inform the owner so they will not have time to hide the children before the government checks. Moreover, if the government sees any child labour, they can take the children away from the farm and charge them. Furthermore, the government need to make sure that children need to be in school. Since education is the only way to have a better future, the government must make some policy for free education until the age of 16. For us, we can buy items with fair trade stickers and search for the companies selling ethical clothing. Here is a website that shows which companies sell ethical clothing and fair trade goods <http://www.thegoodtrade.com/features/fair-trade-clothing> . Ethical clothing has better quality than other kinds of clothes and the materials are organic and recyclable or made from recycled materials. But the most important thing is the child labour is not used by these companies. An example of one ethical clothing is H&M, they show videos inside their factories and they shared their sustainability report to the public. Everyone can help with the problem, we need to do it together.

5. Romania

Dear GTP,

I start by thanking you for the initiative to create this wonderful virtual circle of young people, through which we can all learn from each other. You certainly want to know who is addressing this letter, so I will start by presenting myself.

My name is Ionascu Bianca Daniela, I am 15 years old and I am a simple student at B.P. Hasdeu in Buzau County, who also loves justice and wants the rights of the child to be taken more seriously and even improved. So, in my view, the right that should be better exploited in Romania would be the one that talks about child protection against all forms of exploitation, against violence, abuse and other harmful treatments. Because, in many countries this right is the most infringing, as children are often used as aids in begging or even exploited by parents through work (most often being forced to beg from a young age) or being raised with violence unacceptable physics. In addition, many children are abandoned in many orphanages, thus being engaged in a life free of parental affection and a particular education. My idea of making the world more reflection on this right would be to pay a very high fee for any abandoned child or if the family has nothing to support the state with an amount of Monthly money better than those that are now in Romania. Also, I would reimburse a small amount of money for every citizen who is claiming abuse in the family, and the guilty person receives two months of community work or receives a pretty damning fine.

In addition, I would like the children's allowances in Romania to pay a baby's birth fee. I would also like the GTP to help with putting together the ideas presented in numerous letters, such as making some money or making virtual protests to influence the Romanian state. On the other hand, we should give those who have a family history abusive one-month courses with compulsory attendance in which they teach us how to behave with our own children and how to respect their existence. If they are not present would then receive a fairly large fine.

I say that children suffering from many injustice will get a better fortune with GTP and UNICEF, because each one deserves a decent and happy life from all points of view. Thank you to GTP for helping to form a better society and to address the irregularities in this world, although it is very difficult and I also thank you for extending the mentality of many who will be the next power in the world and that will probably change many.

At the end of the letter I would like to add that the children are gifts from God and that by abusing or not respecting their rights we play a holy, divine gift and that it brings the greatest sin and also think that we have Were children and how it would have been if we were treated by our parents as we treat our children.