

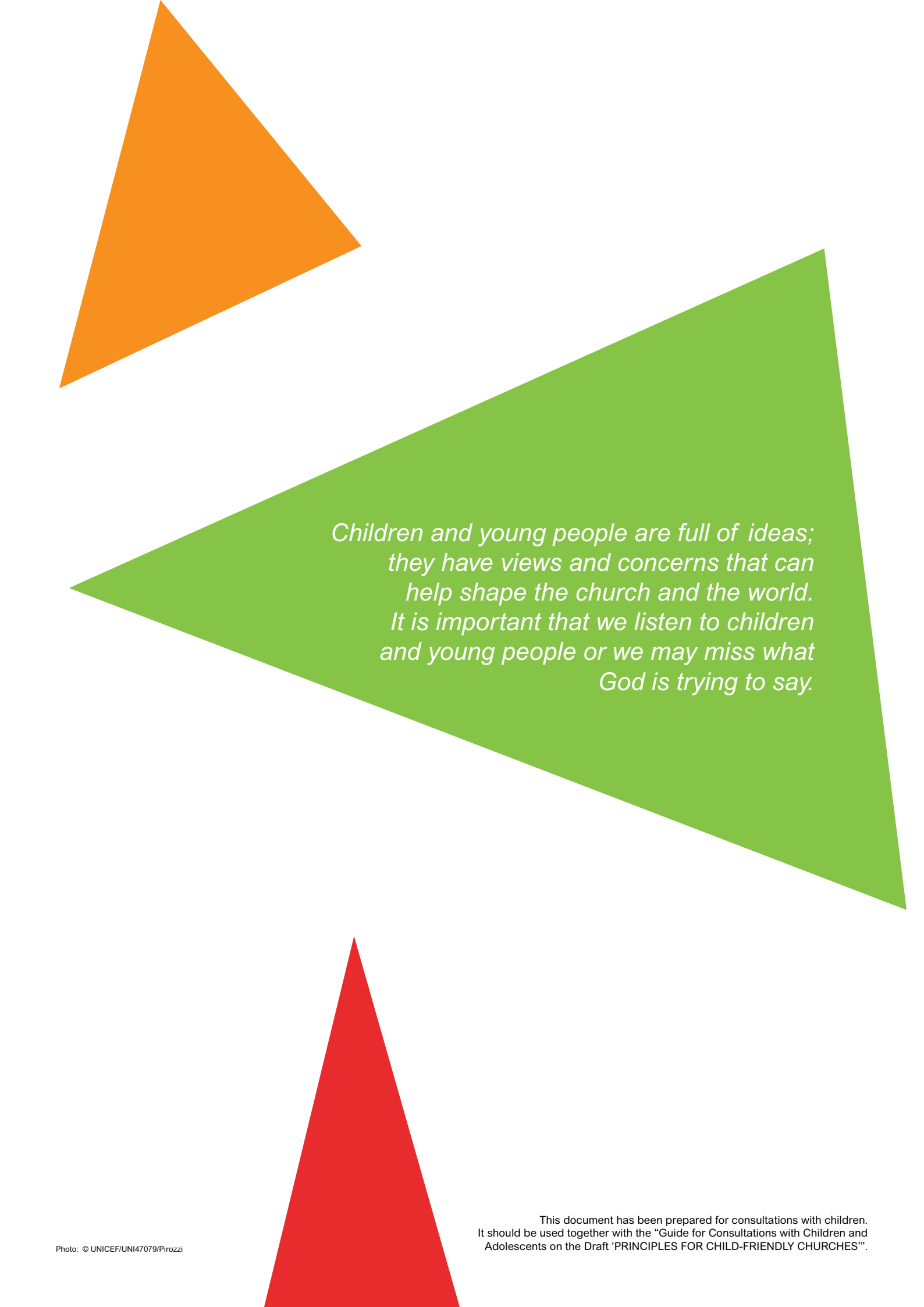
# The Draft “Principles for Child-Friendly Churches”

Explained to 0 to 10-year-old Children



World Council  
of Churches





*Children and young people are full of ideas;  
they have views and concerns that can  
help shape the church and the world.  
It is important that we listen to children  
and young people or we may miss what  
God is trying to say.*

This document has been prepared for consultations with children.  
It should be used together with the "Guide for Consultations with Children and  
Adolescents on the Draft 'PRINCIPLES FOR CHILD-FRIENDLY CHURCHES'".

The World Council of Churches is a group of 345 churches that are all working together to try to make our world a better place. It is also called the WCC. In 2013 a big meeting took place in Busan, a city in Korea, and over 5000 people attended. Some of the people were leaders of churches, some were young people like you, and all of them talked about how to make our world a better place.<sup>1</sup>

Some of those people thought that churches should do more to take care of children, and at the end of their meeting they all signed a paper called "Putting Children at the Centre." This meant that they all agreed that children and young people are very important, and that churches should work very hard at improving children's lives, and also that the WCC should help them to be able to do this.

UNICEF is an organization that helps all children in the world to have food to eat, medicines to treat their illnesses, good schools to learn in, and families that cares for them.

The WCC and UNICEF formed a partnership, and they have agreed to work very hard to create ideas to help make churches welcoming, safe, and fun places for children all over the world to be. These ideas needed to explain what churches could do to make them better places, and then, very importantly, would encourage all the churches worldwide to use the ideas.

To help us to find out what makes a church welcoming, safe, and fun, or what we have to do to make it that way, we need to ask the most important people. And the most important people, of course, are you!

So we've invited you to this class because we really want to hear what you think.

We can share all our ideas with you, listen to what you have to say about them, hear your ideas, and find out if they can be made even better?

These are the ideas:



- 1. The church needs to make all decisions together with children when these decisions have something to do with children's lives. They also have to plan activities for children together with children.**

a) *In church activities and planning for services and praying*

Churches that support these ideas want to include all children, their families, and caregivers when making decisions about church life.

Churches should:

- ask all children, families, and caregivers what they need and would like before planning their activities;
- encourage all church leaders and church councils to be trained in the rights of a child, and in how to listen to children and respect them;
- use creative ideas in church to discover the children's views, ideas, and worries;

<sup>1</sup> Methodology for pre-school age could include forms of storytelling such as "once upon a time."

- create and use prayer/service resources that help children, their families, or caregivers to feel welcome and participate in their own style and tradition, and that focus on the needs of their day-to-day lives;
- consider the needs of any children with disabilities when planning all activities.

b) *In society (society means a large group of people including you, your family, your school, your community, your leaders, politicians, and decision-makers)*

Children who feel safe, valued, and included in their churches want to share their ideas and suggestions and involve others. Churches should ask society to listen to children's ideas.

In particular, churches should:

- make people understand how much children and adolescents can contribute to decisions affecting their lives and how important it is to give them a chance to do so;
- create spaces for children and adolescents to tell politicians and decision-makers what they think about decisions that affect their lives;
- help children develop their own ideas by informing them of what is going on and teaching them how to express their views to adults;
- support children sharing their views and ideas with society so that their views and ideas are listened to and taken into account.



## 2. The church needs to do everything possible to keep children safe.

a) *Making sure that children feel safe in their church community and that they would know who to go to for help if they had a problem.*

Churches should:

- have safe rules and instructions for activities with children, for the selection of staff and volunteers, and for how they care for children, making sure these are people you can trust;
- create ways to help children report when someone makes them feel uncomfortable or if they experience violence or something bad;
- be able to immediately stop whoever is making children feel uncomfortable or being violent with them.

b) *Finding ways to help stop children being hurt by other people in villages/cities/countries and throughout the world Churches should be safe places that offer help and support to children.*

They should:

- support parents and offer teaching on issues that affect children, such as bullying and abuse;
- help people understand that it is always wrong to hurt children just to make them do what you want.

- c) *Thinking of ways that churches can protect children in dangerous situations (for example: storms, earthquakes, wars)*

Churches should help and support children in danger by:

- being close to and helping children who are scared;
- trying to convince governments and all kinds of groups (like schools, associations, youth clubs) to pay special attention to the needs of children during emergencies.

- d) *Helping all children to have something called a “birth certificate.” The “birth certificate” should be given when a baby is born. This important document helps children to get medicine if they are sick and to be able to go to school.*

All children are important and they should all have a birth certificate.

Churches should:

- help all people to understand how important this is to a child;
- keep records of children who are baptized.



- 3. The church needs to look for ways to help all people understand the rights of children, and encourage people in charge of a village/city/country to act when the rights of children are not being taken seriously.**

Churches should always aim to focus on children’s needs when creating activities and help people to understand the rights of the child and the importance of this.

Churches should:

- create ways to discover how children feel about issues that affect their lives and act on this;
- offer children the opportunity to express their views and concerns and to highlight their rights through working with the television, radio, and Internet.



- 4. The church needs to organize activities with children to protect our planet.**

The lives of children will be affected by future climate change.

Churches should:

- offer children the chance to help shape the future by being involved in activities and training and included in making decisions on any issues about protecting the earth;
- explore how eco-friendly they are and then include children in deciding on any changes that need to be made.