



**Convention on the
Rights of the Child**

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COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Forty-second session

**CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES
UNDER ARTICLE 44 OF THE CONVENTION**

Concluding observations: Lebanon

1. The Committee considered the third periodic report of Lebanon (CRC/C/129/Add.7) at its 1142nd and 1144th meetings (see CRC/C/SR.1142 and 1144) held on 24 May 2006, and adopted at the 1157th meeting, held on 2 June 2006, the following concluding observations:

A. Introduction

2. The Committee welcomes the submission of the State party's third periodic report, which provided a thorough and self-critical perspective to the implementation of the rights of the child in Lebanon. It also welcomes the State party's written replies to its list of issues (CRC/C/LBN/Q/3), which allowed for a clearer understanding of the situation of children in the State party. The Committee further notes with appreciation the constructive dialogue it had with the high-level, cross-sectoral delegation, which provided additional information in the course of dialogue.

B. Follow-up measures undertaken and progress achieved by the State party

3. The Committee welcomes the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography on 8 November 2004 and of the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime on 5 October 2005.

4. The Committee notes with appreciation the very many activities of the Higher Council for Childhood, for example in the legislative area and for awareness-raising and training, and the establishment of various specialized commissions within the Council, such as on sexual exploitation, child abuse and neglect, and child participation.

5. The Committee welcomes the establishment of new institutions for the implementation and promotion of children's rights, such as the centre for child victims of sexual violence and the centre to combat child labour.

C. Factors and difficulties impeding the implementation of the Convention

6. The Committee acknowledges that the recent political turmoil in the State party is a factor impeding the full implementation of the provisions of the Convention in the State party.

D. Principal subjects of concern and recommendations

1. General measures of implementation (arts. 4, 42 and 44, para. 6 of the Convention)

Committee's previous recommendations

7. The Committee notes with satisfaction the State party's efforts to address various concerns and recommendations (CRC/C/15/Add.169) made upon the consideration of the State party's second periodic report (CRC/C/70/Add.8) through legislative measures and policies. However, some of the concerns it expressed and recommendations it had made regarding, inter alia, independent monitoring, the minimum age for marriage, the very low age of criminal responsibility, the right to a nationality, the right to be protected against violence, and abuse and the protection of refugee children, including Palestinian children, have not been sufficiently addressed.

8. **The Committee urges the State party to make every effort to address the recommendations issued in the concluding observations on the second periodic report that have not yet been implemented, and to address the list of concerns contained in the present concluding observations on the third periodic report.**

Legislation

9. The Committee acknowledges the legislative efforts of the State party to strengthen the implementation of children's rights shown by the amendments to various laws and the preparation of bills but it is concerned at the slow progress made in this regard.

10. **The Committee recommends that the State party expedite and strengthen its efforts to harmonize its legislation fully with the provisions and principles of the Convention, and that it provide the necessary human and financial resources for the full and effective implementation of its domestic laws in order to better protect the rights of the child.**

National plan of action

11. The Committee notes the preparation by the Higher Council for Childhood of a national plan for the advancement of children in Lebanon that will take into account the General Assembly special session document (2002) "A world fit for children" and the Arab Action Plan for Children.

12. **The Committee recommends that the State party as a matter of priority complete, in consultation and cooperation with relevant partners, including civil society, this national plan of action for children, and that it ensure that the plan contain specific, and where appropriate, time-bound targets and measures for the implementation of the Convention. It recommends that the State party provide the necessary human and financial resources and adequate follow-up mechanisms for its full implementation.**

Coordination

13. The Committee welcomes the activities of the Higher Council for Childhood, which includes representatives from governmental and non-governmental organizations, that endeavour to coordinate the implementation of the rights of the child and related policies and programmes in Lebanon, including the programme of cooperation with the Ministry of Interior and Municipal Affairs to enhance the role of municipalities in the implementation of the Convention and the coordination and creation of networks with non-governmental organizations and international organizations working with and for children. Nevertheless, the Committee is concerned that the coordination of existing policies and programmes is rather sectoral and fragmented, and that coordination of implementation at regional and local levels is still insufficient.

14. **The Committee recommends that the Higher Council for Childhood continue to strengthen its coordination role in relation to the various governmental bodies and non-governmental organizations involved in the implementation of the rights of the child at national, regional and local levels, in order to ensure uniform implementation of the child rights policies and programmes in all parts of the country. In this regard, the Committee recommends that the State party provide the Higher Council for Childhood with the specific mandate for this coordination, and that the State party strengthen its capacity to evaluate, based on a proper data collection and analysis, the implementation of the Convention.**

Independent monitoring

15. The Committee welcomes the information that the establishment of a National Human Rights Institution and/or a specific children's ombudsperson is under consideration/discussion, but regrets, with reference to its previous recommendations in this regard adopted in 1996 (CRC/C/15/Add.54) and 2002 (CRC/C/15/Add.169), that no further progress has been made.

16. **The Committee urges the State party to establish an independent national human rights institution in accordance with the Paris Principles and, taking into account its general comment No. 2 (2002) on the role of independent national human rights institutions. The Committee also urges the State party to ensure that the national human rights institution has a clear mandate to monitor children's rights at national, regional and local levels and to receive and investigate complaints on the violations of children's rights from the public, including individual children. The Committee further urges the State party to provide this national human rights institution with adequate financial, human and material resources.**

Allocation of resources

17. The Committee takes note of the State party's national expenditure on health care, social services and education, and it shares the State party's concern at the inefficiency observed in government expenditure on social services. It notes with concern the lack of budget allocations for children at the local level.

18. **The Committee recommends that the State party strengthen its efforts to significantly increase the proportion of the budget allocated for the realization of children's rights to the "maximum extent ... of available resources", take the necessary measures to impose the efficiency of the expenditure, and give special attention to budget allocation for children, in particular for the most vulnerable children, at the local level.**

Data collection

19. The Committee welcomes the implementation of the "Child Info" programme on indicators relating to children and it is encouraged by the plan to establish a research, information and documentation centre for childhood within the framework of the programme of cooperation between the Lebanese Government and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) 2002-2006. However, the Committee is concerned about inadequate mechanisms to collect, analyse and disaggregate statistical data on children and adolescents, and it regrets the lack of updated information and data concerning many issues covered by the Convention, for example, suicides among adolescents, residential care institutions, youth literacy, working children, Palestinian refugee children, children belonging to minorities and migrant children.

20. **The Committee recommends that the State party continue to strengthen its mechanisms for data collection and develop indicators consistent with the Convention in order to ensure that data are collected on all areas covered by the Convention and that they are disaggregated, inter alia, by age for all persons under 18 years, gender, urban and rural area, and by those groups of children who are in need of special protection. It further encourages the State party to use these indicators and data to formulate policies and programmes for the effective implementation of the Convention. In addition, the Committee recommends that the State party continue to seek technical cooperation from UNICEF.**

Cooperation with civil society

21. The Committee notes with appreciation the State party's close collaboration with non-governmental organizations and the active role of civil society in the implementation of the rights of the child and in the provision of education, health and social services. As regards the process of privatizing or contracting out services to non-governmental organizations, the Committee notes with concern the weak accountability and transparency of this process, as well as the lack of critical information provided by external monitoring and assessment mechanisms.

22. **The Committee recommends that the State party take into account the recommendations adopted on its Day of General Discussion on the Private Sector as Service Provider and its Role in Implementing Child Rights (CRC/C/121) and:**

(a) **Continue to strengthen its cooperation with non-governmental organizations, and involve them systematically at all stages in the implementation of the Convention, as well as in policy formulation;**

(b) **Provide non-governmental organizations with adequate financial and other resources when they are involved in discharging governmental responsibilities and duties with regard to the implementation of the Convention;**

(c) **Ensure, for example, by providing guidelines and standards for service provision that non-governmental organizations, both for-profit as well as not-for-profit, fully comply with the principles and provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child; and**

(d) **When privatizing or contracting out services to non-governmental organizations, enter into detailed agreements with the service providers, ensure effective monitoring of implementation as well as transparency of the entire process.**

Dissemination of the Convention and training activities

23. The Committee welcomes the State party's efforts to promote awareness of the rights of the child and to disseminate the Convention in close collaboration with UNICEF and non-governmental organizations. Nevertheless, the Committee considers that education for children and the public at large and training activities for professional groups on children's rights need ongoing attention.

24. **The Committee recommends that the State party strengthen its efforts to disseminate the Convention both to children and to the broader public, including appropriate material specifically for children translated in the different languages spoken in Lebanon, including those spoken by migrant and refugee children. In addition, it recommends that the State party undertake systematic education and training programmes on the provisions of the Convention and the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography for all professional groups working for and with children, such as judges, lawyers, law-enforcement officials, civil servants, teachers, and health personnel including psychologists and social workers.**

2. Definition of the child (art. 1 of the Convention)

25. The Committee notes with concern that the minimum age for marriage still depends on a person's religion (acknowledging that there are 18 official recognized religious and confessional groups in the State party). It also notes with concern that there are different minimum ages for marriage for boys and girls within the same religious or confessional group.

26. **The Committee recommends, referring to its previous recommendation (CRC/C/15/Add.169, para. 22) adopted following the consideration of the State party's second periodic report, that the State party take urgent measures to engage the religious and confessional groups in efforts to prohibit in practice early and/or forced marriages, and to adjust to that effect (the implementation of) existing provisions applicable for these communities.**

3. General principles (arts. 2, 3, 6 and 12 of the Convention)

Non-discrimination

27. The Committee notes with appreciation that article 7 of the Constitution of Lebanon promotes the principle of non-discrimination. However, it notes with concern that the Constitution and domestic laws guarantee equal status only to Lebanese children, but leave, for example, foreign children and refugee and asylum-seeking children without such protection. It is concerned at the persistent de facto discrimination faced by children with disabilities, the aforementioned foreign, refugee and asylum-seeking children, Palestinian children, children living in poverty, children in conflict with the law, and children living in rural areas, especially with regard to their access to adequate social and health services and educational facilities. The Committee also notes with concern the reports of the expressions of racial discrimination and xenophobia in the State party.

28. **The Committee recommends that the State party strengthen its efforts to eliminate discrimination against children with disabilities, foreign, refugee and asylum-seeking children, Palestinian children, children living in poverty, children in conflict with the law, and children living in rural areas and other vulnerable groups:**

(a) By reviewing domestic laws with a view to ensure that children in the Lebanese territory are treated equally and as individuals;

(b) By ensuring that these children have equal access to health and social services and to quality education, and that services used by these children are allocated sufficient financial and human resources;

(c) By enhancing monitoring of programmes and services implemented by local authorities with a view to identifying and eliminating disparities; and

(d) By preventing racial discrimination and xenophobia targeting certain foreign groups, including refugee and asylum-seeking children.

29. **The Committee requests that specific information be included in the next periodic report on the measures and programmes relevant to the Convention undertaken by the State party in order to follow up on the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action adopted at the 2001 World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, and taking into account the Committee's general comment No. 1 on article 29, paragraph 1, of the Convention (aims of education).**

Best interests of the child

30. While noting that the State party has given consideration to the principle of the best interests of the child, the Committee is of the view that this principle is not adequately reflected in the State party's legislation, policies and programmes.

31. **The Committee recommends that the State party review its legislation and administrative measures to ensure that article 3 of the Convention is duly reflected therein and that this general principle is taken into account when judicial, administrative, policy, or other decisions are made.**

Right to life, survival and development

32. The Committee expresses its deep concern at “the crimes committed in the name of honour” affecting children both directly and, through their mothers, indirectly. It notes with particular concern that, according to article 562 of the Penal Code, a man who kills his wife or other female relative may receive a reduced sentence if he demonstrates that he committed the crime in response to a socially unacceptable sexual relationship conducted by the victim. According to the information provided by the State party, some of these crimes have been committed by children.

33. **In the light of article 6 of the Convention, the Committee strongly recommends that the State party review as a matter of priority its domestic legislation, particularly article 562 of the Penal Code, with a view to addressing “honour crimes” in an effective way and to eliminating all provisions allowing reductions of sentence if the crime is committed in the name of “honour”. It recommends that the State party provide special training and resources to law-enforcement personnel with a view to investigating and prosecuting such cases in an effective way. Furthermore, the State party should raise awareness of this socially and morally unacceptable practice, involving also religious and community leaders.**

Respect for the views of the child

34. The Committee notes with appreciation the State party’s efforts to promote and respect children’s right to freely express their views and to participate in society, such as children’s municipality councils and youth cabinets, and the national plan of action to increase the participation of children and young people. In particular, the Committee welcomes the State party’s efforts to promote the right to participation of those children who belong to the most vulnerable groups, such as Palestinian refugee children.

35. Nevertheless, the Committee notes with concern that the religious and sharia courts decide on issues related to custody and care of the child without hearing the child’s opinion. It also shares the State party’s concern that the traditional attitudes in Lebanese society may limit children’s right to freely express their views within the family, in schools and in the community at large.

36. **In the light of article 12 of the Convention, the Committee recommends that the State party continue to strengthen its efforts to promote respect for the views of all children and to facilitate their participation in all matters affecting them within the family, in schools, in institutions, and in judicial procedures, including procedures in the religious and sharia courts, in local communities and in society at large. It recommends that the State party undertake a regular review of the extent to which children’s views are taken into consideration and of their impact on policymaking and court decisions, on programme**

implementation and on children themselves. The Committee further recommends that the State party continue to collaborate with civil society organizations, including Save the Children, to increase opportunities for children's participation.

**4. Civil rights and freedoms
(arts. 7, 8, 13-17, 19 and 37 (a) of the Convention)**

Birth registration

37. The Committee notes with concern that children born to Palestinian fathers, who do not themselves possess recognized identity documents, are not registered with the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA), and neither receive recognized identity documents from the State party nor have the ability to acquire a nationality, even if they have a Lebanese mother, as nationality can be transmitted solely through a child's father.

38. In order to secure the full enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by children in Lebanon, the Committee recommends that the State party ensure that all children within its territory, including the children of Palestinian refugees without identity documents, are registered immediately after birth. Meanwhile, children whose births have not been registered and who are without official documentation should be allowed to access basic services, such as health and education, while waiting to be properly registered.

Right to a nationality

39. The Committee reiterates its concern that citizenship is transmitted solely through a child's father, which can result in statelessness, for example, among children born to Lebanese mothers and refugee fathers.

40. The Committee urges the State party to critically review its legislation, particularly the Legislative Decision No. 15/1925, in order to ensure that also a Lebanese mother has the right to confer Lebanese citizenship to her children equally and without discrimination.

Corporal punishment

41. Despite the 2001 Memorandum of the Minister of Education, which prohibits educational staff from "inflicting corporal punishment, insulting, verbally humiliating, and attacking the honour of their students", corporal punishment is still used in schools and other institutions. The Committee notes that corporal punishment is unlawful as a sentence for crime and prohibited as a disciplinary measure in penal institutions. However, it notes with concern that, according to article 186 of the Penal Code, corporal punishment is lawful in the home.

42. The Committee urges the State party, while taking into account the Committee's general comment No. 8 (2006) on the right of the child to protection from corporal punishment and other cruel or degrading forms of punishment:

(a) To critically review its current legislation, in particular article 186 of the Penal Code, with a view to preventing and ending the use of corporal punishment of

children as a method of discipline and to introducing new legislation prohibiting all forms of corporal punishment of children in the family and within all institutions, including public and private schools and the alternative care system; and

(b) To introduce public education, awareness-raising and social mobilization campaigns on alternative non-violent forms of discipline with the involvement of children in order to change public attitudes to corporal punishment, and to strengthen its cooperation with non-governmental organizations, such as Save the Children, in this respect.

**5. Family environment and alternative care
(arts. 5; 18, paras. 1-2; 9-11; 19-21; 25; 27, para. 4 and 39 of the Convention)**

Children deprived of a family environment

43. The Committee continues to be deeply concerned at the high number of children placed in institutions, and at the lack of the possibility of having the placement decision reviewed by a civil court. It notes with concern the lack of information and statistics at most institutions regarding the children in their care, these children's progress, and the nature of services provided. The Committee notes with concern that many professionals and volunteers working with children deprived of a family environment are not familiar with the existing laws and regulations protecting the child, including the attention that should be given to family reunification. As regards the role of non-governmental institutions providing alternative care services, the Committee refers to its concerns and recommendations raised earlier in paragraphs 21 and 22 on cooperation with civil society.

44. **In the light of articles 3, 20 and 25 of the Convention, and taking into account the Committee's recommendations adopted on its Day of General Discussion on children without parental care (CRC/C/153), the Committee urges the State party:**

(a) To take immediate preventive measures to avoid separation of children from their family environment by providing appropriate assistance and support services to parents and legal guardians in the performance of their child-rearing responsibilities, including through education, counselling and community-based programmes for parents, and to reduce the number of children living in institutions by fully implementing the laws relating to family-type alternative care of children and by addressing the root causes behind separation, including socio-economic problems, faced by parents;

(b) To ensure that the need for the placement of each child in institutional care is always assessed by a competent, multidisciplinary group of professionals and that the initial decision of placement is done for the shortest period of time and subject to judicial review by a civil court, and that it is further reviewed in accordance with article 25 of the Convention;

(c) To ensure that both a short- and a long-term plan, including the goals of the placement and the measures to achieve these, is available at the time of the placement of the child and is regularly adapted to her/his development;

(d) To strengthen its efforts to develop a traditional foster-care system, including *kafalah*, by paying particular attention to the rights recognized in the Convention, including the principle of the best interests of the child, and other family-based alternative care;

(e) To invest in systematic education and research in the field of the protection and alternative care of children, and to provide professionals working with and for children deprived of a family environment with regular rights-based training; and

(f) To establish an effective regulation and evaluation mechanism for alternative care, including informal forms of alternative care, and to develop, standardize and control the quality of alternative care and related programmes and services in consultation with children.

Adoption

45. The Committee is concerned at possible irregularities in the systems of adoption and *kafalah*. It notes with concern that the procedures for adoption in religious and civil courts are not in full conformity with article 21 of the Convention and that the principle of the best interests of the child is not always subject to the principal consideration during these procedures. It also notes with concern the prevalence of illegal adoptions both at national and intercountry level.

46. **The Committee recommends that the State party review the laws and practices relating to the system of adoption and *kafalah* in order to ensure that under domestic legislation the rights of the child are protected regardless of the child's origin, civil, social or religious status, and that it ensure that cases of intercountry adoption are dealt with in full accordance with the principles and provisions of the Convention, in particular article 21. The Committee further recommends that the State party ratify the 1993 Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in respect of Intercountry Adoption and seek technical assistance, among others, from the Hague Conference on Private International Law and from UNICEF.**

Violence, abuse and neglect, maltreatment

47. The Committee acknowledges the efforts made by the State party to address abuse, neglect and maltreatment of children, for example, through awareness-raising activities and the establishment of a subcommission on abuse and neglect within the Higher Council of Childhood, but regrets that more specific follow-up has not been given to the concrete recommendations in the previous concluding observations (CRC/C/15/Add.169). Abuse, neglect and maltreatment of children remain serious problems in the State party. Due to the strong social and cultural taboos victims and witnesses rarely report these cases, despite the campaign "Let's stop sticking our heads in the sand", which encourages individuals to bring to light violations of children's rights. The Committee also notes with concern that the Penal Code criminalizes only the rape of girls, leaving boys without legal protection.

48. **In light of article 19 and other relevant provisions of the Convention, and referring to its previous recommendations (CRC/C/15/Add.169) adopted following the consideration of the State party's second periodic report, the Committee urges the State party:**

(a) To take effective legislative measures to prohibit all forms of physical, sexual and mental violence against boys and girls in the family;

(b) To establish effective procedures and mechanisms to receive, monitor and investigate complaints, including intervention where necessary, and to prosecute cases of abuse and ill-treatment, ensuring that the abused child is not victimized in legal proceedings and that his/her privacy is protected;

(c) To ensure that all child victims of violence and abuse have access to adequate care, counselling and assistance with recovery and reintegration;

(d) To continue to introduce awareness-raising campaigns, with the active involvement of children themselves, in order to prevent all forms of violence against children and to combat child abuse, including sexual abuse, with a view to changing public attitudes and prevailing cultural practices in this respect;

(e) To establish a toll-free, 3-digit helpline with 24-hour service for children and to facilitate the collaboration of this helpline with State alliances, such as the police, health, and social welfare systems, and child-focused non-governmental organizations in order to enhance its intervention and follow-up model; and

(f) To seek assistance from, among others, UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO).

49. In the context of the Secretary-General's study on the question of violence against children and the related questionnaire sent to Governments, the Committee acknowledges with appreciation the written replies of the State party to this questionnaire and its participation in the Regional Consultation for the Middle East and North Africa, held in Egypt from 27 to 29 June 2005, and in the Regional Follow-up Consultation, held in Egypt from 25 to 28 March 2006. The Committee recommends that the State party use the outcome of these regional consultations as a tool for taking action, in partnership with civil society, to ensure that every child is protected from all forms of physical, sexual and mental violence and to gain momentum for concrete and, where appropriate, time-bound actions to prevent and respond to such violence and abuse.

6. Basic health and welfare

(arts. 6; 18, para. 3, 23; 24; 26; 27, paras. 1-3, of the Convention)

Children with disabilities

50. The Committee expresses its concern at many constraints that prevent the full implementation of the Law No. 220 of 2000 on the rights of persons with disabilities. Despite the efforts of the National Committee for Disabled Affairs and the intergovernmental disability committee under the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Committee notes with concern that children with disabilities are not provided with equal opportunities for full participation in all spheres of life, e.g. they have limited access to the physical environment, including public buildings, and transportation, information and communication, and inclusion of these children in the

mainstream school system is still occasional. The Committee also notes with concern that children with disabilities are primarily placed in residential care institutions. Finally, it notes with concern that Palestinian refugee children with disabilities have inadequate access to community rehabilitation services and, in particular, that Palestinian refugee girls with disabilities face multiple discrimination.

51. The Committee recommends that the State party, taking into account the United Nations Standard Rules on the Equalization of Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities (see General Assembly resolution 48/96) and the recommendations adopted by the Committee on its Day of General Discussion on the rights of children with disabilities (see CRC/C/69):

(a) Prevent and prohibit all forms of discrimination against children with disabilities and ensure equal opportunities for their full participation in all spheres of life by implementing the Law No. 220 of 2000 on the rights of persons with disabilities, and by including disability aspects in all relevant policymaking and national planning;

(b) Collect adequate statistical data on children with disabilities and use such disaggregated data in developing policies and programmes to promote their equal opportunities in society, paying particular attention to children with disabilities belonging to the most vulnerable groups, such as children with disabilities living in remote areas of the country and Palestinian refugee children with disabilities, particularly girls;

(c) Provide children with disabilities with access to adequate social and health services and the physical environment, information and communication;

(d) Ensure that public education policy and school curricula reflect in all their aspects the principle of full participation and equality and include children with disabilities in the mainstream school system to the extent possible and, where necessary, establish special education programmes tailored to their special needs;

(e) Develop programmes, including community-based programmes, in order to promote alternatives to institutionalization and allow children with disabilities to stay at home with their families;

(f) Strengthen the functioning and activities of the National Committee for Disabled Affairs and cooperation with non-governmental organizations working in the field of disability issues;

(g) Seek technical cooperation with, among others, UNICEF and WHO.

Health and health services

52. The Committee commends the State party's developed health-care system and notes with appreciation the declining rates of infant and under-five mortality. However, it notes with concern that:

(a) Disadvantaged families appear to lack equal access to quality health services;

- (b) Regional disparities exist in the provision of health services and the national immunization programme;
- (c) Despite improvements, the rate of exclusive breastfeeding is still relatively low; and
- (d) Accidents constitute the main cause of child mortality (1-5 years) and adolescents.

53. **The Committee recommends that the State party strengthen its efforts to reform the health sector and, particularly, to build the capacity of public health sector. It recommends that appropriate resources be allocated for the public health sector and that the State party continue to develop and implement comprehensive policies and programmes for improving the health situation of children, so as to fully implement the Convention, in particular articles 4, 6 and 24. It also recommends that the State party facilitate equal access to quality primary health services for mothers and children in all areas of the country in order to end the disparities in health-care provision between the different areas.**

54. **The Committee further recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Guarantee access to quality prenatal and post-natal health services and facilities, including training programmes for midwives and traditional birth attendants, by paying particular attention to the rural areas of the country;**

(b) **Continue to take all necessary measures to lower infant, under-five and maternal mortality rates;**

(c) **Strengthen existing efforts to immunize as many children and mothers as possible by effectively implementing national immunization programmes;**

(d) **Encourage exclusive breastfeeding for six months after birth, with the addition of an appropriate infant diet thereafter, and take measures to improve the nutritional status of children through education and the promotion of healthy feeding practices;**

(e) **Conduct a study on the scope and causes of accidental deaths, and strengthen its efforts to reduce accident-related deaths through, inter alia, awareness-raising campaigns and education programmes aimed at parents, children and the public at large; and**

(f) **Continue to cooperate and seek technical assistance with, inter alia, UNICEF and WHO.**

55. While noting with appreciation the maternal and child health-care services provided by UNRWA, the Committee is concerned about congenital malformation, acute respiratory infections and diarrhoea, which are also leading causes of child death during the second and third years of life among Palestinian refugee children. It notes with concern that due to the poor living conditions in camps children suffer from acute health problems.

56. **As regards Palestinian refugee children and their health status, the Committee recommends that the State party address their special needs, such as acute health problems caused by poor living conditions, by supporting UNRWA and non-governmental organizations in their efforts to provide more targeted health services.**

Adolescent health

57. While noting with appreciation the education project for youth on sexual education and protection from sexually transmitted infections launched in 2003, the Committee regrets that due to the lack of a national policy or action plan on school health services, such programmes are restricted to medical consultations and that medical exams and dental and oral health services cover only a limited number of pupils. Concern is also expressed about smoking, which is an increasing trend among adolescents. In addition, the Committee expresses its concern at the increasing suicide rate among adolescents.

58. **The Committee recommends, taking into account its general comment No. 4 (2003) on adolescent health and development in the context of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, that the State party adopt and implement a national policy or action plan on school health services, thus extending the scope of current school health services, as well as reproductive health services provided by health centres, to cover counselling and preventive health education. It also recommends that the State party provide all pupils with regular medical exams as well as dental and oral health services. The Committee recommends that the State party considerably increase its anti-smoking efforts. It further recommends that the State party study the possible causes of youth suicide and the characteristics of those who appear to be most at risk, and put in place support and intervention programmes, particularly in the field of mental health.**

HIV/AIDS

59. The Committee notes the relatively low HIV infection rate in the country and is encouraged by the State party's efforts to prevent and combat HIV/AIDS by implementing the National HIV/AIDS Program (NAP), including youth activities around this programme. Notwithstanding these positive steps taken, the Committee is concerned that the awareness of HIV/AIDS, including the modes of HIV transmission, has not led to increased precautionary measures, such as the use of condoms, among adolescents.

60. **The Committee recommends, taking into account the Committee's general comment No. 3 (2003) on HIV/AIDS and the rights of the child and the International Guidelines on HIV/AIDS and Human Rights (E/CN.4/1997/37), that the State party:**

(a) Strengthen its efforts to prevent the spread of HIV/AIDS, inter alia, by implementing the National HIV/AIDS Program (NAP), and continue to pay particular attention to safe sex education and awareness-raising activities among adolescents;

(b) Take effective measures to prevent discrimination against children infected with and affected by HIV/AIDS by prohibiting any form of discriminatory act;

(c) Ensure adolescents' access to adequate social and health services, including youth-sensitive and confidential counselling on HIV/AIDS, and provide them with accurate and comprehensive information about HIV/AIDS; and

(d) Seek technical assistance, among others, with the United Nations Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS).

Standard of living

61. While taking note of the State party's efforts to reduce poverty, for instance, through two social projects initiated in 2002 aiming at community development and poverty alleviation, and the five-year development plan 2000-2004, the Committee regrets the limited data available on poverty reduction. The Committee notes with concern continued regional disparities in poverty levels and services provided within the poorest areas, as well as a widening poverty gap between social groups.

62. **In light of article 27 of the Convention, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) Continue to take measures to raise the standard of living among its population, particularly rural populations living in poverty and those living in urban "poverty pockets", for example, through formulating and implementing a comprehensive and time-bound national development strategy and social programmes aiming at reducing poverty and strengthening community development;

(b) Consider preparing a poverty reduction strategy with special emphasis on vulnerable children and their families, and strengthen community mobilization, including the participation of children, for poverty reduction at the local level; and

(c) Strengthen its efforts to provide support and material assistance to disadvantaged children and their families.

7. Education, leisure and cultural activities (arts. 28, 29 and 31 of the Convention)

Education, including vocational training and guidance

63. The Committee welcomes the National Plan on School for All (2005-2015) and is encouraged by the improved enrolment in pre-primary education, but it notes with concern that no central authority is in charge of the preschool education. The Committee takes note of the State party's intention to raise the age at which compulsory education ends, from current 12 years to 15 years. As regards primary education, the Committee notes with concern that parents are still charged for some costs of education despite the legal guarantee of free education, and that repetition and dropout rates have increased. It also notes with concern the decrease in the enrolment in secondary education and the backward quality of technical and vocational education and training.

64. **The Committee recommends that the State party continue to allocate adequate financial, human and technical resources in order to:**

(a) Provide access to early childhood education for every child and raise awareness and motivation of parents with respect to preschools and early-learning opportunities, by taking into account the Committee's general comment No. 7 (2005) on implementing child rights in early childhood and establishing a national mechanism to promote, develop and coordinate early childhood education;

(b) Expedite its plans to erase the gap between the school-leaving age and the minimum age for employment by adopting the bill to raise the age of compulsory education to 15 years and the bill amending the Labour Code to bring it into line with ILO Conventions Nos. 138 and 182;

(c) Ensure that primary education is free for all children and attended by all children, and adopt effective measures to decrease the repetition and dropout rates in primary education;

(d) Continue to take measures to increase enrolment rates in secondary education as well as technical and vocational education and training, including for girls, children living in rural areas, and children with disabilities; and

(e) Seek cooperation, among others, with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to improve the education sector further.

65. As regards Palestinian refugee children, the Committee notes that UNRWA is the main provider of basic education and that in general, the enrolment rate of primary education is satisfactory. However, it is concerned about the low enrolment in secondary education, particularly with regard to girls. It notes with concern the high rate of illiteracy among Palestinian refugee children with disabilities, despite the fact that many of these children could benefit from school mainstreaming.

66. **The Committee recommends that the State party adopt and implement adequate governmental programmes and projects to respond to the educational needs of Palestinian refugee children in addition to UNRWA's efforts in this regard, and that it continue to cooperate closely with UNRWA.**

Aims of education

67. The Committee notes with appreciation the State party's efforts to revise the school curriculum, for example by introducing new school subjects such as information technology and physical education, and by incorporating the rights of the child in the curriculum. However, it is concerned about the inadequate training of the majority of teachers. The Committee expresses its concern at the differences in the quality of education between private and public institutions. It also notes with concern regional disparities in the number of teachers, the poor condition of school buildings, and the insufficient quality and availability of learning materials and equipment, particularly in rural areas.

68. **In light of article 29 of the Convention, and taking into account the Committee's general comment No. 1 (2001) on the aims of education, the Committee recommends that paying particular attention to rural areas, the State party:**

(a) Further strengthen efforts to improve the quality of education both in public and private schools by providing appropriate pre- and in-service training to teachers;

(b) Address the issue of regional disparities in the number of teachers by ensuring a decent living wage for teachers and promoting the teaching profession, for example, through the media;

(c) Use human rights, and particularly child rights, education to promote equality and tolerance in schools; and

(d) Repair and upgrade conditions and equipment of schools.

**8. Special protection measures
(arts. 22, 38, 39, 40, 37 (b)-(d), 32-36 of the Convention)**

Children affected by armed conflict

69. The Committee reiterates its concern at the persisting negative impact of the past armed conflict on children, including the vulnerability to socio-economic deprivation and slow return of displaced families, and that the problem of landmines still exists.

70. **In light of articles 38 and 39 of the Convention, the Committee recommends that the State party take all appropriate measures to ensure that children affected by armed conflict have access to adequate health and social services, including psychosocial recovery and social reintegration. It also recommends that the State party continue its demining activities and seek the necessary technical and financial support within a framework of international cooperation, including from United Nations agencies.**

Refugee children

71. While welcoming the improved collaboration between the State party and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Committee is concerned at the gaps in the legal protection of refugees in the State party. It also welcomes the information that the State party undertakes activities to accede to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol. The Committee notes with concern that since the State party does not extend asylum, many children and their families seeking asylum are subject to domestic laws for illegal entry and stay, and thereby are at risk of detention, fines and deportation. In this context, the Committee also refers to the concerns and recommendations expressed under the right to a nationality.

72. **In light of articles 3 and 22 and other relevant provisions of the Convention, the Committee urges the State party, while taking into account the Committee's general comment No. 6 (2005) on treatment of unaccompanied and separated children outside their country of origin:**

(a) To develop a legislative framework for the protection of asylum-seeking and refugee children, particularly unaccompanied children, and to seek technical assistance from UNHCR in this respect;

(b) To accede to the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and its 1967 Protocol, and thus create an environment conducive to refugee protection in the country;

(c) To ensure that detention of refugee/asylum-seeking children takes place only when necessary, is in their best interests and is for the shortest time possible, and that deportation is in full compliance with international standards and that the best interests of the child is a primary consideration in that regard; and

(d) To continue and strengthen its collaboration with UNHCR.

Palestinian refugee children

73. The Committee welcomes the efforts of the State party to address the issue of Palestinian refugee children living in Lebanon, for example by establishing a dialogue with UNRWA with the aim of improving respect and protection of Palestinian refugee children's rights. The Committee also notes with appreciation that the State party has conducted field visits to familiarize itself with the actual situation and the needs of the Palestinians. Despite these positive developments, the Committee continues to be deeply concerned about the harsh social and economic living conditions of Palestinian refugee children in refugee camps, their limited access to public services, including social and health services and education, and their exposure to violence at home, in schools and in the wider community.

74. The Committee reiterates its previous recommendations in this regard adopted in 1996 (CRC/C/15/Add.54) and 2002 (CRC/C/15/Add.169) and urges the State party to ensure the full realization of all human rights and fundamental freedoms of Palestinian refugee children living in Lebanon, for example, by including them in development programmes, by paying special attention to the improvement of housing conditions in refugee camps, by ensuring their equal access to all public services and by protecting them from all forms of violence. The Committee recommends that the State party both continue and strengthen its support for UNRWA, and that it seek, where appropriate, international assistance in this regard.

Children of migrant workers

75. The Committee is concerned at the situation and vulnerability of children of migrant domestic workers in Lebanon.

76. The Committee recommends that the State party develop and implement policies and practices that will better protect and serve children of migrant workers. It also recommends that the State party ratify the Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

Street children

77. The Committee acknowledges the State party's efforts to address the issue of street children, for example: the cooperation programme between the Higher Council for Children and the Arab Council for Childhood and Development to raise social awareness of the issue of street children; the joint project of the Ministry of Interior and municipalities to prevent children working on the streets; and training provided to Internal Security Forces, Civil Defense and Municipality police for intervening with street children. While noting the State party's intention to conduct a comprehensive study on working street children, the Committee regrets the lack of reliable statistics. The Committee notes with concern that the children are often exploited as beggars and that children begging on the streets are criminalized. It further notes that these children often lack documentation, which excludes them from health, education and social services.

78. The Committee recommends that the State party continue its efforts to address the issue of street children, with the aim of protecting these children and reducing their number:

(a) By adopting a comprehensive national strategy to address the situation of street children and provide these children with official documents and, adequate assistance, including recovery and social reintegration services for physical, sexual and substance abuse, as well as vocational and life-skills training, in order to support their full development;

(b) By refraining, as a matter of policy, from detaining children begging in the streets and seeking alternative forms for their detention, that are fully compatible with the provisions of the Convention;

(c) By undertaking an action-oriented study to identify the root causes and magnitude, as well as the personal characteristics, of street children in order to prevent this phenomenon, and providing them with opportunities for reunification with their family when this is in the best interests of the child; and

(d) By collaborating with non-governmental organizations working with street children in the State party and with children themselves, and seeking technical assistance from relevant United Nations and other international organizations.

Economic exploitation

79. The Committee welcomes the State party's and the International Labour Organization/International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour's (ILO/IPEC) Time-Bound Programme for the eradication of the worst forms of child labour as well as the other legislative and policy measures taken to address the economic exploitation of children. The Committee notes with concern that poverty is a major cause of child labour and that the remote areas of the country have the highest rate of working children. It also notes with concern that many children work in hazardous work conditions in the informal sector, including agriculture, metalwork and crafts, fishing, rock-cutting and tobacco cultivation.

80. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) Effectively implement its domestic labour laws and the ILO/IPEC Time-Bound Programme for the eradication of the worst forms of child labour by paying particular attention to the poor and remote areas of the country;

(b) Improve the labour inspection system in order to safeguard that the work performed by children is light work and not exploitative, and, in particular, that it empower the system to monitor and report on the practice of domestic and rural labour by children;

(c) Provide former child workers with appropriate recovery and educational opportunities; and

(d) Continue to seek technical assistance from ILO/IPEC.

Sexual exploitation and trafficking

81. While acknowledging the establishment of a subcommission on sexual exploitation, the Committee is deeply concerned about sexual exploitation of children in the State party, in particular the increase in the number of children trafficked to the State party for purposes of prostitution. The Committee regrets the inadequate legal framework for the prevention and criminalization of sexual exploitation and trafficking of children, and that victims are criminalized and sentenced to detention. In addition, concern is expressed about existing risk factors contributing to trafficking activities, such as poverty, early marriages and sexual abuse.

82. **The Committee urges the State party:**

(a) To review its domestic legislation, particularly the provisions of the Penal Code, so as to criminalize all forms of trafficking as defined in the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress, and Punish Trafficking Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime;

(b) To develop and adopt a comprehensive national strategy or plan of action on measures against trafficking, and to establish a national multisectoral task force to implement and monitor it;

(c) To conduct a comprehensive study to assess the causes, nature and extent of the commercial sexual exploitation and trafficking of children;

(d) To ensure that victims of sexual exploitation and trafficking are not criminalized and that they are provided with adequate recovery and social reintegration services and programmes in accordance with the Declaration and Agenda for Action and the Global Commitment adopted at the First and Second World Congresses against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children;

(e) To seek to establish bilateral and multilateral agreements and cooperation programmes with countries of origin and transit to prevent the sale and trafficking of children;

(f) **To launch awareness-raising campaigns for children, parents and other caregivers, in order to prevent trafficking, sexual exploitation and pornography involving children, and to sensitize officials working with and for victims of trafficking; and**

(g) **To seek cooperation, among others, with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and non-governmental organizations.**

83. The Committee endorses the recommendations made by the Special Rapporteur on trafficking in persons, especially women and children, following her visit to the State party (E/CN.4/2006/62/Add.3), and recommends that the State party implement them fully.

Administration of juvenile justice

84. The Committee welcomes the juvenile justice reform in Lebanon and the State party's close collaboration with the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in this respect. It notes with appreciation that the State party has, for example, established a new residential institution, at Dahr el-Bashek in 2004, for girls in conflict with the law, and a special police unit, the Minors Brigade, responsible for questioning delinquent minors and taking statements from young victims. While acknowledging the State party's efforts to protect the rights and the best interests of juveniles deprived of their liberty by implementing the Law No. 422 on the protection of juveniles in conflict with the law or at risk (2002), the Committee notes with concern that some articles of this law are not in full conformity with the provisions of the Convention. In particular, it notes with concern that:

(a) The minimum age of criminal responsibility, which is set at 7 years, is still much too low;

(b) Juveniles can still undergo same penal trial procedures as adults;

(c) A well-organized and well-trained juvenile probation service needed for an efficient development and implementation of alternative measures, such as community service orders, restorative measures and family conferencing, is lacking;

(d) Prison facilities and detention conditions are overcrowded and fall short of the international standards; and

(e) Disaggregated statistical and other information on the implementation in practice of the Law No. 422 (2002), on the protection of juveniles in conflict with the law, is very limited.

85. The Committee recommends that the State party continue and strengthen its efforts to ensure the full implementation of juvenile justice standards, in particular articles 37, 40 and 39 of the Convention and other relevant international standards in this area, such as the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (the Beijing Rules), the United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (the Riyadh Guidelines), and the United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of Their Liberty, taking into account the recommendations adopted by the Committee on its Day of General Discussion on juvenile justice (CRC/C/46, paras. 203-238). It recommends that the State party:

(a) **Raise, as a matter of priority, the minimum age of criminal responsibility to 12 years, as intended in the campaign of the Higher Council for Childhood;**

(b) **Continue to develop and implement a comprehensive system of alternative measures, such as community service orders and interventions of restorative justice, in order to ensure that deprivation of liberty is used only as a measure of last resort;**

(c) **Take the necessary measures, for example suspended sentencing and early release, to ensure that deprivation of liberty is limited to the shortest time possible;**

(d) **Take effective measures to improve the condition of detention and prison facilities for children in conflict with the law;**

(e) **Continue to strengthen the quality and availability of specialized juvenile courts and judges, police officers, and prosecutors, inter alia through systematic training of professionals, and consider the establishment of a specialized probation service for children in conflict with the law;**

(f) **Ensure that persons under 18 years of age have access to legal aid and independent and effective complaints mechanisms; and**

(g) **Continue to seek technical assistance from the United Nations Interagency Panel on Juvenile Justice.**

9. Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child

86. **The Committee recommends that the State party ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict.**

10. Follow-up and dissemination

Follow-up

87. **The Committee recommends that the State party take all appropriate measures to ensure full implementation of the present recommendations, inter alia, by transmitting them to the members of the Cabinet and the National Assembly, and, when applicable, to governorates, for appropriate consideration and further action.**

Dissemination

88. **The Committee further recommends that the third periodic report and written replies submitted by the State party and related recommendations (concluding observations) it adopted be made widely available in the languages of the country, including (but not exclusively) through the Internet, to the public at large, civil society organizations, youth groups, professional groups, and children, in order to generate debate and awareness of the Convention, its implementation and its monitoring.**

11. Next report

89. **The Committee invites the State party to submit a consolidated fourth and fifth report by 12 December 2011 (that is, 18 months before the due date of the fifth report). This is an exceptional measure due to the large number of reports received by the Committee every year and the consequent delay between the date of submission of a State party's report and its consideration by the Committee. This report should not exceed 120 pages (see CRC/C/118). The Committee expects the State party to report every five years thereafter, as foreseen by the Convention.**
