

Legislation

11. The Committee, while noting that 20 states are in the process of enacting the 2003 Child Rights Act (CRA), remains concerned that, to date, only 4 out of 36 states have enacted the CRA. The Committee is also concerned that many of the existing legislation at federal, State and local level in the State party, in particular the religious and customary laws, do not fully comply with the principles and provisions of the Convention.

12. The Committee recommends that the State party engage all efforts and resources necessary for the effective implementation of the rights and principles enshrined in the Child Rights Act, and ensure as a matter of priority that the Act is duly adopted in all states. The Committee further urges the State party to take all necessary measures to ensure that all of its domestic and customary legislation conform fully with the principles and provisions of the Convention, and ensure its implementation.

Coordination

13. While noting the existence of the Department of Child Development in the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Development and the National Child Rights Implementation Committee (NCRIC) as bodies entrusted with the responsibility of monitoring compliance with the Convention, the Committee is seriously concerned about the apparent lack of coordination among national and State level authorities on strategies, policies and programmes affecting children.

14. The Committee is also concerned by the serious lack of resources allocated to the Department of Child Development in the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Development and the National Child Rights Implementation Committee, as well as the lack of authority vested in these bodies.

15. The Committee recommends that the State party take all necessary measures to establish an effective body or structure for the coordination of the implementation of the Convention with adequate resources and appropriate authority, strategy and plans.

16. The Committee also recommends that the Department of Child Development in the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Development and the National Child Rights Implementation Committee are strengthened and given adequate financial support, so as to ensure their effectiveness.

National Plan of Action

17. The Committee welcomes the development of a National Plan of Action, but is concerned that it is limited and does not cover all areas of the Convention.

18. The Committee recommends the State party to develop a more comprehensive, rights-based National Plan of Action with the time frame up to 2015, which covers all areas of the Convention and incorporates the objectives and goals of the outcome document entitled: "A World Fit for Children" of the 2002 United Nations General Assembly

24. **The Committee recommends that the State party develop a system of data collection and indicators consistent with the Convention and disaggregated by gender, age, urban/rural area and by regions/states. This system should cover all children up to the age of 18 years, with specific emphasis on those who are particularly vulnerable. It further encourages the State party to use these indicators and data in the formulation of laws, policies and programmes for the effective implementation of the Convention. The Committee recommends that the State party seek technical assistance from, inter alia, UNICEF and ILO in this regard.**

Dissemination

25. While taking note of the efforts made by the State party to disseminate the principles and provisions of the Convention, including the work of the Child Rights Information Bureau (CRIB), the Committee is of the view that these measures need to be strengthened. The Committee is also concerned at the lack of a systematic plan to introduce training and awareness among professional groups working for and with children.

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

(a) Strengthen its efforts to ensure that the provisions of the Convention are widely known and understood by adults and children alike;

(b) Systematically involve community leaders in sensitization programmes to combat certain harmful traditional practices and customs which may have negative bearings on the full implementation of the Convention;

(c) Undertake systematic education and training on the provisions of the Convention for all professional groups working for and with children, in particular parliamentarians, judges, lawyers, law enforcement officials, civil servants, municipal and local workers, personnel working in institutions and places of detention for children, teachers, health personnel, including psychologists, and social workers;

(d) Introduce human rights education including the rights of the child, into the school curricula, beginning in primary schools; and

(e) Seek technical assistance from, among others, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights and UNICEF.

2. Definition of the child

(art. 1 of the Convention)

27. While noting that the Child Rights Act provides a clear definition of the child, the Committee remains concerned at the wide variety of minimum ages that exist in the states of the State party, including unclear definitions of the child, and that many of these minimum ages are too low.

cases of vesico-vaginal fistula, a condition caused by giving birth when the cervix is not well developed. The Committee is further concerned that such girls, once married, are not afforded protection and that the enjoyment of their rights as children is not ensured as enshrined in the Convention.

55. The Committee recommends that the State party amend existing legislation to prevent early marriages. It also recommends to the State party that it take measures to ensure that when underage girls are married, they continue fully enjoying their rights as set out in the Convention. The Committee also recommends that the State party develop sensitization programmes, involving community and religious leaders and society at large, including children themselves, to curb the practice of early marriages.

Harmful traditional practices

56. The Committee welcomes the introduction of a bill on violence against women in Parliament in May 2003, aimed to prohibit forms of violence such as harmful traditional practices and domestic violence, including marital rape. However, it reiterates its concern at the widespread and continuing existence of harmful traditional practices in the State party, most notably the practice of female genital mutilation, as well as scarification and ritual killing of children which pose very serious threats to children, in particular the girl children.

57. The Committee is concerned at the lack of legal prohibition and sufficient interventions on the part of the State party to address harmful traditional practices. The Committee is also concerned at the lack of support services available to protect girls who refuse to undergo FGM and of services to rehabilitate girl victims of the practice.

58. The Committee recommends that the State party, as a matter of urgency, take all necessary measures to eradicate all traditional practices harmful to the physical and psychological well-being of children, by strengthening awareness-raising programmes. The Committee further recommends the State party to adopt federal legislation prohibiting such practices and encourage further legal changes at the State level, in particular, female genital mutilation, as well as measures to provide support for girls at risk and girls who refuse to undergo FGM, and provide recovery services for victims of this harmful traditional practice.

Social security

59. In view of the high proportion of children living in poverty in the State party, the Committee notes with concern the lack of reliable information regarding the coverage of the social security plans in place vis-à-vis the needs of children and their families. The Committee reiterates that such data is crucial for the monitoring and evaluation of progress achieved and impact assessment of policies with respect to children. The Committee is also concerned that the social security system currently in place in the State party is not in full compliance with article 26 of the Convention.

11. Next report

86. In light of the recommendation on reporting periodicity adopted by the Committee and described in the report on its twenty-ninth session (CRC/C/114), the Committee underlines the importance of a reporting practice that is in full compliance with the provisions of article 44 of the Convention. An important aspect of States parties' responsibilities to children under the Convention is ensuring that the Committee on the Rights of the Child has regular opportunities to examine the progress made in the Convention's implementation. In this regard, regular and timely reporting by States parties is crucial. The Committee invites the State party to submit its third and fourth periodic reports in one consolidated report by 18 May 2008, i.e. the due date of the fourth periodic report. This consolidated report should not exceed 120 pages (see CRC/C/118). The Committee expects the State party to report thereafter every five years, as foreseen by the Convention.
