

to girls, children living and/or working in the streets, disabled children, children living in rural areas and indigenous children; the inadequacy of measures to promote widespread awareness of the principles and provisions of the Convention to adults and children alike, particularly among those belonging to indigenous populations; and, the lack of adequate and systematic training provided to professional groups working for and with children, including judges, lawyers, law enforcement personnel, health professionals, teachers, social workers, personnel working in child care institutions for children, police officers and officials of the central and local administrations.

Concern was also expressed over: the insufficient budget allocation at all levels, for social expenditures in particular in favour of children belonging to the most disadvantaged groups of the population; the trend toward the perpetuation of poverty among marginalized groups of children in Panama; the fact that 25 per cent of families live in poverty and 20 per cent live in extreme poverty; the fact that despite the efforts made by the government in the health and housing sectors, the situation remains precarious; the insufficiency of measures taken to ensure the effective implementation of the general principles of non-discrimination, the best interest of the child, the right to life and freedom of expression of the Convention in practice, especially with regard to girls, children belonging to indigenous groups and to poor families; the high incidence of abandoned children and the fact that approximately 20 per cent of the children born each year have adolescent mothers; the persistence of violence against children within the family, including the use of corporal punishment; the need for further measures to protect children from media information and material injurious to their well-being; the insufficiency of measures, including legislative ones, taken to regulate adequately adoption and to prevent and combat abuses such as the trafficking of children; the persisting disparities in relation to the low access to education of children living in rural areas, indigenous children and refugee children who do not enjoy a system of education adequate to their cultural values and identity; the low rates of retention, the high rates of repetition and school drop-outs, especially at the end of the primary education level, and the persistent problem of illiteracy amongst these groups; the insufficient legal protection and the lack of adequate procedures for refugee children, especially unaccompanied minors; the difficulties encountered by those children in acquiring access to services such as education, health and social services; the continuing problem of child labour and the failure of the government to enforce child labour provisions adequately in the rural areas of the country; the incompatibility between the administration of juvenile justice and articles 37 (conditions of detention), 39 (physical and psychological recovery, social reintegration) and 40 (due process) of the Convention; and, the apparent absence in national legislation of minimum ages below which a child may not be deprived of liberty or be considered criminally responsible.

The Committee recommended that the government:

- ▶ accord a higher priority to children's issues;
- ▶ adopt all the necessary measures to ensure the full compliance of its national legislation with the Convention;

- ▶ continue efforts aimed at the adoption of a Code on Children and that revisions to legislation be undertaken in the light of article 2, (non-discrimination), article 3 (best interests of the child), article 6 (right to life, development and survival) and article 12 (respect of the views of the child);
- ▶ define in its legislation a minimum age below which children may not be deprived of their liberty;
- ▶ review legislation on the age of marriage for girls with a view to raising it;
- ▶ take all appropriate measures to protect children against sexual exploitation;
- ▶ develop a comprehensive national strategy on children on an urgent basis and continue efforts to strengthen the institutional framework designed to promote and protect human rights, in general, and the rights of the child, in particular;
- ▶ develop a permanent and multidisciplinary mechanism for coordination and monitoring of the implementation of the Convention both at national and local levels and in urban and rural areas;
- ▶ consider the establishment of an independent body, such as an ombudsperson;
- ▶ give priority attention to the development of a system of data collection by age, gender, rural/urban and social ethnic origin and to the identification of appropriate disaggregated indicators with a view to addressing all groups of children in society, to evaluate progress achieved and difficulties hampering the realization of children's rights;
- ▶ take measures aimed at developing a culture of human rights and changing attitudes towards children in general, including those belonging to indigenous groups;
- ▶ disseminate information and education about children's rights to children and adults alike and translate this information into the different languages spoken by indigenous people;
- ▶ in response to the high level of illiteracy in the country, encourage the use of the media in a manner adapted to the various levels of audiences in the country;
- ▶ provide training and education on the principles and provisions of the Convention for all professionals working with or for children, including judges, lawyers, law enforcement personnel, health professionals, teachers, social workers, personnel working in child care institutions for children, police officers and officials of the central and local administrations;
- ▶ include children's rights in school curricula as a means of enhancing respect for the indigenous culture, promoting multiculturalism and combatting paternalistic attitudes prevailing in society;
- ▶ in the area of budget provisions, pay particular attention to children belonging to vulnerable and marginalized groups, with a view to providing adequate services for children, including in the areas of education and health, and overcoming persisting disparities;