

National Plan of Action for Children; decentralization of the National Plan of Action leading to adoption of 34 district plans of action; enactment in 1995 of a new Constitution; enactment, in 1996, of the Children's Statute incorporating specific provisions related to children's rights; the fact that Uganda is one of seven African countries to have ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child; and, the priority being given to health and, in particular, health care for children especially in the areas of child mortality, breastfeeding, nutrition programmes, HIV/AIDS, female genital mutilation and access to clean drinking water.

The Committee acknowledged that poverty, armed conflict in the north and the HIV/AIDS pandemic have posed major difficulties hindering implementation of the Convention. In this regard, the Committee also noted that prejudicial traditional practices and customs, particularly in rural areas, are obstacles to implementation especially with regard to the principles of non-discrimination, best interests of the child and respect for the views of the child.

The principal subjects of concern identified by the Committee were: the inadequate coordination between national and district bodies to promote and protect the rights of the child; lack of the necessary institutional capacity, skills and financial resources in the National Children's Council and other bodies, ministries and councils to carry out their mandates; the insufficiency of measures to harmonize national legislation with the Convention particularly in the areas of the definitions of a child, youthful offenders and minors; following on this point, the incompatibility of national legislation with the Convention in the areas of non-discrimination related to marriage, employment and juvenile justice, and the conflict between customary law and the Convention; lack of adequate measures for systematic collection of data in all areas covered by the Convention; the limited human and financial resources to collect and process data and assess the impact of policies on children, especially the most vulnerable groups of children; insufficiencies and lack of a systematic approach to training in children's rights for all professional groups, including police and security forces, army officials, judicial personnel, magistrates, lawyers, teachers and school administrators, social workers, staff of child-care institutions and health and medical personnel; and, the failure to translate the Convention into any of the vernacular languages.

The Committee expressed concern over: the lack of adequate legislative, administrative and other measures related to economic, social and cultural rights, in particular for girls, orphans, children with disabilities, abandoned children, children born out of wedlock, children in single-parent families, street children and child victims of abuse and/or economic or sexual exploitation; the persistence of discriminatory practices against girls and some groups of children, especially children with disabilities and children in rural areas; the insufficiency of measures to combat and prevent ill-treatment and abuse; the fact that disciplinary measures in some schools and law enforcement institutions involve corporal punishment; lapses in registration at birth; the continuing high rates of infant and child mortality; the rapid spread of HIV/AIDS; failure to implement fully and equally the right to free and compulsory primary education; violations of international humanitarian law in the northern part of the country;

violations of rights in detention centres; remanding of children in adult prisons or police cells; long periods of custody; delays before trial; the inadequacy of existing alternative measures to imprisonment; the difficulties encountered by refugee children with regard to access to education, health and social services; the insufficiency of legal and other measures to prevent and combat the economic exploitation of children; the increase in the number of street children; the increase in the number of child prostitutes; the lack of a state strategy to combat the abuse and sexual exploitation of children; and, the insufficiency of measures taken for the physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of child victims of war and abuse.

The Committee recommended that the government:

- ▶ take steps to strengthen the National Children's Council and coordination between all relevant national and district bodies;
- ▶ harmonize fully national legislation with the principles and provisions of the Convention;
- ▶ make greater efforts to ensure that the provisions of the Convention are widely known, partly through translation of the Convention into local languages, and establish systematic training and retraining programmes on children's rights for all professional groups;
- ▶ accord priority to budget allocations related to the economic, social and cultural rights of children, with particular emphasis on health and education;
- ▶ take all appropriate measures to prevent and combat all forms of discrimination against girls, orphans, children with disabilities, abandoned children, children born out of wedlock, child victims of abuse and/or sexual and economic exploitation;
- ▶ direct special efforts to the development of an effective system of registration at birth;
- ▶ take all appropriate measures to prevent and combat infant and child mortality and malnutrition, strengthen information and prevention programmes to combat HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases; and strengthen family planning and reproductive health educational programmes, including for adolescents;
- ▶ take measures to stop the killing and abduction of children and use of children as child soldiers in the area of armed conflict;
- ▶ give special attention to the problems of ill-treatment and abuse, including sexual abuse within the family and corporal punishment in schools;
- ▶ undertake a comprehensive reform of the juvenile justice system and pay particular attention to the right to prompt access to legal assistance and judicial review;
- ▶ give special attention to refugee and internally displaced children to ensure they have equal access to basic facilities;
- ▶ adopt a strategy to address the problem of children working and/or living on the street;
- ▶ design and adopt informal education programmes to prevent sexual abuse and exploitation of children, especially child prostitution; and,