

**Country session: Rwanda**

**Date of session: 27-28 January 2020 (83<sup>rd</sup> session)**

**Background information**

[OHCHR press release](#)

Webcast: [first part](#) and [second part](#)

[Audio file](#)

**Reporting**

*Reporting methodology*

Standard reporting procedure

Simplified reporting procedure

Concluding Observations with urgent measures

*State report*

| Common core document             |                 |
|----------------------------------|-----------------|
| <a href="#">Updated document</a> | 16 October 2015 |

| CRC           |             |
|---------------|-------------|
| No. of report | V-VI        |
| Due date      | 22 Feb 2018 |
| Submission    | 10 Jul 2018 |

| Written replies |                 |
|-----------------|-----------------|
| Submission      | 07 Jan 2020     |
| Due date        | 15 October 2019 |

**Public reports from children’s rights defenders**

**Alternative reports and additional information**

|             |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|-------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <b>NGOs</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Center for Reproductive Rights and Health Development Initiative</li> <li>• Children's Voice Today</li> <li>• Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children</li> <li>• Coalition Umwana Ku Isonga</li> <li>• Human Rights Watch</li> </ul> |
|-------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|

**State delegation**

The [delegation](#) from Rwanda was a small delegation composed by the Minister for Gender and Family Promotion as Head of delegation; the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Rwanda to the United Nations Office at Geneva, the Executive Secretary of the National Commission for Children, the Head of International Justice and Judicial Cooperation Department at the Ministry of Justice and the First Counsellor at the Permanent Mission of Rwanda.

**Committee’s Task Force members**

| Name & Last Name           | Country  |
|----------------------------|----------|
| Mikiko Otani (Coordinator) | Japan    |
| Suzanne Aho Assouma        | Togo     |
| Cephas Lumina              | Zambia   |
| Faith Marshall-Harris      | Barbados |

**Dialogue description**

i. Character of the dialogue

The dialogue held with the delegation was constructive and interactive. The atmosphere was positive.

ii. General assessment made by the Committee

The Committee welcomed the State of Rwanda for the adoption of several laws and for the strengthening of the legal framework for the protection of the right of the child. The Committee experts commended the various legislative, institutional and policy measures to implement the CRC Convention and appreciate the updated common core document that gives an idea of the context in the country. The Committee raised some problems regarding the coordination within the commission of children rights and was concerned by the insufficient presence of child protection workers in all districts. Concerning the budget, the experts noted the number of mechanisms to evaluate the efficiency of the allocation of resources but asked for more child participation in the discussions around budget allocations. In its concluding remarks, the Committee recognized that Rwanda had made important improvements in the promotion and protection of children’s rights but stressed that a number of issues still require further attention.

iii. Main issues discussed:

- Street Children:** The Committee was concerned about the situation of street children in Rwanda, stressing that the measures taken to ensure adequate support and protection were insufficient. The Committee was worried about the information received on the practice of rounding up street children and holding them arbitrarily in transit centres for weeks or months, where they often are victims of violence from the guards and their living conditions are precarious. The State delegation contested these allegations of arbitrary detention and explained that these measures are not putted in place to “clear up the streets” but to support and rehabilitate children without parental care living in the streets, where they are at high risk of abuse and violence. Whether possible, the government aims to reunite them with their families. The role of the transit centres is to identify the children and do an assessment of their needs and personal situations in order to evaluate the possibilities to reunite them with their families. The delegation explained that children’s stay in transit centres is temporary - maximum 72 hours - and after they are transferred to rehabilitation centres for further and specific supports. The State party affirmed that the transit centres cannot be closed unless the phenomenon of street children is solved. The Rwanda Rehabilitation Service and other private rehabilitation centres had so far reunited more than 5,000 children with their families. The delegates underlined that the government is very invested in the wellbeing of these children and do a lot of efforts to ensure they can enjoy all their rights and to reduce the number of children living in the streets. the Committee experts encouraged the delegation to examine whether this procedure was in conflict with the Constitution or the Convention of the right of the child. The delegation reiterated the transit centres are temporary place and rather leaving the children in the streets will conflict with the convention of child rights. Finally, the delegates welcomed any constructive comments to help improve the efforts to support the children at high risk of abuse.
- Birth Registration:** The Committee welcomed the efforts made by the government to increase birth registration rates but noted that still a lot of children in Rwanda don’t have a birth certificate, notably children living in rural areas, refugee and migrant children. Therefore, the Committee experts asked for statistics on birth registration as well as for information on the plan to enhance birth registration and tackle this issue. The delegation responded that the government addressed the issue by revising the law in order to encourage birth registration, but statistics are not available yet. Everyone has the right to be freely registered at the hospital and the presence of health facilities is ensured in every district. At each health facility there is a registration officer, and all the information are digitalized, birth registration is free, but a fee is requested for the issuing of a birth certificate. For those who are not registered at birth, there is the possibility of late birth registration and a lot of awareness campaigns are being conducted to sensitize those in rural areas on the importance of it. The delegation also underlined that since Rwanda is a very small country and the administrative system is decentralized, it was easier to attend every district. The delegation concluded by stating that in Rwanda, 91 per cent of children were born in health facilities, so the law of December 2019 on e-birth registration ensures that almost all children leave the health facilities with a birth certificate.
- Violence against children:** The Committee inquired about violence against children and asked for information on the status and resources allocated to the National Action Plan, mechanisms for children to report violence as well as on the prohibition of corporal punishment in all settings. The Committee experts were particularly concerned about the high number of cases of sexual violence against girls and the lack of reporting for fear of reprisals. They also noted a high rate of sexual violence in schools and asked about action taken to eliminate the practice and



support the victims. The delegation informed that for the victims of sexual violence, including children, the government provided one-stop centres. Those are present in 44 district hospitals across the country and offer a holistic range of services, encompassing psychological help and support, medical and legal help, shelter and others. Regarding the reporting of abuse, the delegation informed that there is people in the community and local authorities that are mobilized to identify children victims of violence. They bring them to the available centres where professionals can take care of the children. Moreover, regarding the recurrence of sexual violence at school, the delegates informed that all the perpetrators were prosecuted and received aggravated sentences. The Ministry of Education was committed to addressing the issue and demanded each teacher to sign a code of conduct.

- **Education:** The Committee regretted the disparities in access to quality education between rural and urban areas, noting that 35% of the Rwandan population was made by children and over 80% of them were living in rural areas. The Committee experts were concerned by the fact that many schools in rural areas do not have access to electricity or drinking water, and by the high dropout rate, being of 25% for the secondary school level, due to the cost for books and uniforms or child labour for boys and early pregnancies for girls. The Committee experts asked about the measures to rectify the inequality and asked about the possibility to adopt a policy to make comprehensive sexuality and reproductive health education compulsory at schools. The delegation informed that in public schools, services provided were equal for both areas, but the difficult living conditions in rural areas were creating some differences. The delegation affirmed that to address the issue, the government plan was to provide by 2024, access to water and electricity for all schools in the country. Moreover, a policy to ensure the same quality of education in rural and urban schools had been adopted. The delegates stated that to reduce children's labour, the Government had introduced several initiatives to enable and encourage rural children to go to school, such as school feeding programmes. Schools were discouraged from asking parents for contributions to pay for the cost of education. To reduce girls' dropout, programmes were in place to prevent early pregnancy and to encourage young girls to return to school after childbirth. The State party highlighted that for the phenomenon of drop out from school there is zero tolerance and efforts are being made to raise awareness also among parents to make them understand the importance of children education.
- **Family environment and alternative care:** The Committee welcomed the decriminalization of child abandonment but stressed that there seems to be an exception were abandonment of the child is still criminalized and asked for clarifications on that. The Committee experts also commended the national childcare reform and the strong commitment to placing children in family care but inquired on the existence of children orphanages. The delegation clarified that child abandonment has been decriminalized by the criminal court but in some cases, such as child abandonment in a hidden place, the parents were persecuted. Concerning the existence of the orphanages, the delegation answered that they had been closed and more than 3,000 children had been put in a family environment. They also informed that the government was continuing to pursue the policy of ensuring that all children in alternative care grew up in a family environment.



## Recommendations of the Committee

In its [Concluding Observations](#), the Committee drew attention to the need for urgent measures concerning the following areas:

- **Cooperation with civil society:** The Committee reminds the State party of the important role of independent civil society organizations and human rights defenders in promoting the human rights of children, and urges the State party, in line with the Committee's previous recommendations to ensure the independence of civil society organizations and human rights defenders, including child human rights defenders, in promoting children's rights and in exercising their right to freedom of expression and opinion without being subjected to harassment, arbitrary detention or enforced disappearance.
- **Sexual exploitation and abuse:** The Committee recommends that the State party establish effective mechanisms, procedures and guidelines for mandatory reporting of cases of sexual exploitation and abuse in the home, school, institutions and other settings, including online, and ensure the availability of accessible, confidential, child-friendly and effective reporting channels for such violations; ensure that sexual abuse of children is promptly reported, investigated and prosecuted, applying a child-friendly and multisectoral approach with the aim of avoiding the re-traumatization of the child victim, and that perpetrators are duly sanctioned.
- **Children with disabilities:** The Committee recommends that the State party amend the legislation, including Law No. 54/2011, to ensure that the protection of children with disabilities extends to all types of disabilities, including intellectual and psychosocial disabilities; guarantee all children, including those with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities, the right to inclusive education in integrated classes, with accessible environments and curricula and adequately trained teachers and professionals to provide individual support.
- **Adolescent health:** The Committee recommends that the State party strengthen adolescent reproductive health education in all schools to prevent early pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections and substance abuse; improve adolescents' access to confidential and age-appropriate reproductive and sexual health services, family planning services and modern contraceptives; ensure access to safe abortion and post-abortion care services for adolescent girls, without the need for consent and to be accompanied by a parent or legal guardian; address the issue of drug use and substance abuse by children and adolescents by, inter alia, providing children and adolescents with accurate and objective information on preventing substance abuse.
- **Children in street situations:** The Committee recommends that the State party ensure that the rights of children in street situations are fully respected by the police, and that they are not subject to arbitrary detention and ill-treatment; issue guidance to the police and transit centre personnel on the child's right to freedom from all types of violence; investigate reported cases of ill-treatment, including beatings, of children in street situations by the police and transit centre personnel; and prosecute alleged perpetrators.
- **Administration of child justice:** The Committee urges the State party to bring its child justice system fully into line with the CRC Convention and to designate specialized judges for children in all courts and ensure that such specialized judges, as well as prosecutors, police officers and other professionals, receive training on the provisions of the Convention; to promote non-judicial measures, such as diversion, mediation and counselling, for children accused of criminal offences and, wherever possible, the use of non-custodial measures for children, such as probation or community service.

The Committee would also like to draw the State party's attention to the recommendations concerning the following areas:

- **General measures of implementation:** Legislation, comprehensive policy and strategy; coordination; allocation of resources; data collection; independent monitoring; dissemination; awareness-raising and training; cooperation with civil society.
- **General Principles:** Non-discrimination; best interests of the child; respect for the views of the child
- **Civil rights and freedoms:** Birth registration; freedom of thought; conscience and religion; freedoms of expression; association and peaceful assembly; right to privacy and access to appropriate information.
- **Violence against children:** Corporal punishment; violence, abuse and neglect; sexual exploitation and abuse; harmful practices.
- **Family environment and alternative care:** Family environment; children deprived of a family environment; Adoption; children of incarcerated parents.
- **Children with disabilities**
- **Basic health and welfare:** Health and health services; adolescent health; standard of living.
- **Education, leisure and cultural activities:** Education, including vocational training and guidance; human rights education; rest, leisure, recreation and cultural and artistic activities.
- **Special protection measures:** Asylum-seeking and refugee children; children belonging to minority or indigenous groups; economic exploitation, including child labour; children in street situations; sale and trafficking; administration of child justice; child victims and witnesses of crime.
- **Ratification of the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure**
- **Ratification of international human rights instruments**
- **Cooperation with regional bodies**

## Sustainable Development Goals

Throughout its Concluding Observations the Committee referred to the following targets:

- 10.3 on ensuring equal opportunity and reducing inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard.
- 16.9 on providing legal identity for all, including birth registration.
- 16.2 on ending abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children
- 5.2 on eliminating all forms of violence against all women and girls in public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation.
- 3.8 on achieving universal health coverage, including financial risk protection, access to quality essential health-care services and access to safe, effective, quality and affordable essential medicines and vaccines for all.
- 3.7 on ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health-care services, including for family planning, information and education, and the integration of reproductive health into national strategies and programmes.
- 5.6 on ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights as agreed in accordance with the Programme of Action of the ICPD and the Beijing Platform for Action and the outcome documents of their review conferences.



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- 1.2 on reducing at least by half the proportion of men, women and children of all ages living in poverty in all its dimensions according to national definitions.
- 4.1 on ensuring that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes.
- 4.2 on ensuring that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education.
- 4.7 on ensuring all learners acquire knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development, including among others through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship, and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development
- 8.7 on eradicating forced labour, end modern slavery and human trafficking and secure the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers, and by 2025 end child labour in all its forms.

### Next State report

| CRC           |                  |
|---------------|------------------|
| No. of report | VII-VIII         |
| Due date      | 22 February 2025 |

**Disclaimer:** Child Rights Connect reports are all drafted in English. If the State report and/or the alternative reports were submitted in another UN language (Spanish, French, Arabic, Russian or Chinese) the report will be translated accordingly.