



Convention on the Rights of the Child

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Committee on the Rights of the Child Sixty-fifth session

Summary record of the 1850th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Wednesday, 15 January 2014, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Sandberg

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Consideration of reports of States parties *(continued)*

Fourth periodic report of Yemen on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (continued) (CRC/C/YEM/4; CRC/C/YEM/Q/4 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of Yemen took places at the Committee table.*
2. **Mr. Al-Gabil** (Yemen) said that the Yemeni Constitution guaranteed the right to education for all children, and that there was no impediment to school attendance for Akhdam children. Every effort was made to encourage children, particularly those from marginalized groups, to attend school. The national strategy on education for all, which was being developed, included measures to enhance the quality of education through improvements to infrastructure, teacher training, school curricula and learning materials.
3. Over the past few years, the enrolment rate for girls had risen significantly. The number of teachers and administrative staff in girls' schools had been increased, supplementary allowances had been paid to teachers at girls' schools in remote areas, and school uniforms and textbooks had been distributed free of charge to schoolgirls in disadvantaged areas.
4. Social workers had been trained in the organization of awareness-raising activities concerning the importance of girls' education, and a programme of financial incentives was in place in some districts to encourage parents to send their daughters to school.
5. School authorities were working to train female teachers in order to achieve gender balance among teaching staff.
6. The Ministry of Education had issued clear guidelines regarding the prohibition of corporal punishment, and teachers who failed to respect them were subject to disciplinary measures.
7. **The Chairperson** asked whether there was a law prohibiting corporal punishment in schools.
8. **Mr. Al-Gabil** (Yemen) said that such a law did not yet exist.
9. The Ministry of Education, in cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, was carrying out a study in every school in Yemen to determine the nationalities of all refugee children. Many had come from the Syrian Arab Republic and the Horn of Africa. His delegation could provide the Committee with statistics on the number of refugee and displaced children enrolled in the country's schools.
10. As part of efforts to combat the consequences of the events of 2011/12, the Ministry of Education had established an Emergency Committee comprising, inter alia, representatives of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the organization Save the Children and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). A study had been conducted on the damage sustained by educational infrastructure, particularly in the governorates of Saada, Abyan and Aden, and some schools had already been repaired and reopened.
11. According to official statistics, in 2011/12, 981,000 children in Yemen had not been attending school. The enrolment rate for girls was now almost identical to that for boys. The delegation would be willing to provide the Committee with all the relevant statistics at its disposal at the close of the meeting.

12. Patriotism was encouraged among children, particularly during lessons on civic education.
13. Education was one of the Government's priorities and a substantial part of the national budget was allocated to it. The Yemeni authorities hoped that the international community would help them to address the gaps that currently existed in the country's education system.
14. **Mr. Kotrane** stressed that, pursuant to article 29 of the Convention, education should aim to instil in the child a respect for his or her own identity, language and cultural values, but also the values of peace, tolerance and friendship among peoples. He asked what steps the State party was taking to protect children from fanaticism and political and armed conflicts, and to bring them up in a spirit of optimism and openness.
15. **Mr. Al-Gabil** (Yemen) said that school curricula were constantly evolving and that education authorities were introducing the values of diversity and openness and the rejection of fanaticism.
16. **Mr. Ahmed** (Yemen) said that, despite some improvements, the infant mortality rate remained high. Since the early 2000s, the health authorities had devoted efforts to training medical staff, improving health services, strengthening support for vulnerable children, improving infrastructure and changing public attitudes to health-related matters. The Yemeni population was largely rural and health-care facilities only reached 60 per cent of the country. Mobile teams were being put in place to ensure that the most disadvantaged persons living in remote areas had access to health services.
17. The most widespread illnesses were respiratory diseases, diarrhoea, malnutrition, measles and malaria. Free vaccination campaigns aimed at all children were conducted periodically. Such campaigns had been organized following the occurrence of cases of poliomyelitis in 2006. The latest one, mounted in December 2013, had targeted almost 4 million children under the age of 5, 98 per cent of whom had been vaccinated.
18. The National Health Strategy adopted in 2010 included measures to raise public awareness of the issue of a balanced diet, campaigns to prevent respiratory diseases and diarrhoea, and information campaigns on reproductive health.
19. **Ms. Muhamad Shariff** (Coordinator, Country Task Force) asked whether the effectiveness of the campaigns had been evaluated.
20. **Mr. Ahmed** (Yemen) said that the prevention campaigns were run by volunteers, normally women who belonged to the communities targeted and were familiar with local customs. Currently, with the support of the World Bank, 5,000 volunteers were being trained in the Governorate of Hudaydah, the poorest in the country.
21. **The Chairperson** asked whether the prevention campaigns had led to a reduction in the number of cases of diarrhoea.
22. **Mr. Ahmed** (Yemen) said that a study of the country's health situation was under way. He stressed that the health services in Yemen were modest and suffered from budget cuts and a lack of infrastructure and facilities; and the fact that the population was scattered across the country was a real problem.
23. Malnutrition was the cause of nearly 54 per cent of deaths. The study on nutrition conducted by UNICEF in 2012 had shown that 58 per cent of children under the age of 5 suffered from slow development. In April 2004, the Ministry of Health had launched a campaign to combat malnutrition.

24. The Directorate for Food within the Ministry of Health, with the support of the World Food Programme, had launched numerous programmes for the prevention of malnutrition aimed at women, with a view to raising their awareness of the importance of an adequate and balanced diet. The Ministry of Health conducted programmes to promote breastfeeding.

25. **Mr. Cardona Llorens** said he wished to know the amount allocated to the fight against malnutrition in 2012, 2013 and 2014.

26. **Mr. Al-Hamdani** (Yemen) said that 11 per cent of children under the age of 6 months were exclusively breastfed and that the authorities aimed to double that figure by 2015. A breastfeeding promotion programme had been set up for all persons involved in the health sector. No budget line was allocated specifically to the fight against malnutrition.

27. **Ms. Muhamad Shariff** (Coordinator, Country Task Force) asked whether the Yemeni authorities planned to increase the health budget.

28. **Ms. Wijemanne** said that exclusive breastfeeding during the first six months of a child's life made it possible to combat malnutrition and prevent the child from falling ill through drinking contaminated water. She asked whether mothers who wished to breastfeed received support, and whether the promotion of breast-milk substitutes was banned.

29. **Ms. Aldoseri** said she wished to know how the impact of campaigns and programmes was measured.

30. **Mr. Al-Hamdani** (Yemen) said that the authorities did plan to increase the health budget. The results of some programmes, for instance those relating to low body weight and stunted growth, could not be gauged for a number of years. On the ground, however, there were already signs of an improvement in the protocols for handling malnutrition. A special television channel broadcast educational programmes dealing, inter alia, with the issues of health and nutrition. In 2002, Yemen had passed a law to protect breastfeeding. Companies marketing breast-milk substitutes were banned in hospitals.

31. Noting that 64 per cent of the population was under 18, he said that Decree No. 35/3 of 2009 had established a programme relating to adolescent health. Given recent events, it had not been possible to fully implement the programme, but some activities had taken place, notably in the field of reproductive health. The Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Education were currently working to establish school health services and incorporate health-related concepts in school textbooks and curricula.

32. An anonymous helpline reserved for young people had been put in place. A programme to prevent the transmission of AIDS from mother to child and a programme to tackle malaria, tuberculosis and AIDS had been set up.

33. Refugees and internally displaced persons had access to health services. Female genital mutilation was prohibited by law.

34. **Mr. Madi** (Country Task Force) asked whether the publication of the ministerial decree prohibiting female genital mutilation had led to a decrease in the practice.

35. **Mr. Al-Hamdani** (Yemen) said that a national plan to combat female genital mutilation had been adopted, but the resources that had been earmarked for it had been reallocated to the protection of children in emergency situations as a result of events in Yemen over the past two years. In December 2013, UNICEF had decided to set aside a significant budget for the implementation of the plan in 2014–2015.

The meeting was suspended at 11.30 a.m. and resumed at 11.55 a.m.

36. **Mr. Al-Hamdani** (Yemen) said that the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood had been restructured pursuant to the Committee's concluding observations, and

the establishment of an independent body responsible for women's and children's rights had been proposed. Since 2013, a committee comprising five non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and five government agencies had been working to draft the bill on the creation of an observatory on the rights of the child. A project to establish an independent human rights institution was being discussed in parliament.

37. A technical committee to combat trafficking, set up in October 2012, had drafted an anti-trafficking bill, which was under consideration in parliament, and had developed a national strategy to combat all forms of trafficking, which should be implemented in 2014.

38. **Mr. Kotrane** enquired about legislative progress achieved in the implementation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

39. **Mr. Baoom** (Yemen) said that the bill to prohibit trafficking, which would punish all acts provided for in the Protocol, including those committed abroad, would be considered in the near future. Yemen had concluded agreements on extradition with neighbouring countries but, regrettably, had not been able to do likewise with countries from the Horn of Africa. Just 22 per cent of children were declared to the civil registry, which could prevent the remaining 78 per cent from fully enjoying their rights, including the right to education. The birth registration rate varied depending on the sex of the child and on whether the child was born in a region that was rich or poor, rural or urban. Awareness-raising campaigns were planned but would encounter numerous difficulties, including inadequate channels of communication for reaching households in remote areas and a lack of computer tools allowing the data collected to be centralized in a national database. Parents who failed to declare their children to the civil registry were liable to prosecution.

40. **The Chairperson** asked whether the State party planned to amend the nationality act in relation to children with disabilities born to foreign parents.

41. **Mr. Baoom** (Yemen) said that children born in Yemen to foreign parents acquired nationality only if they were not suffering from a mental illness. His delegation had duly noted the recommendations that the Committee had made at the previous meeting, according to which that criterion should be removed; it would inform the Yemeni authorities, who were currently reviewing the law.

42. Another bill, which prohibited female genital mutilation and early marriage, was under consideration. Pending its adoption, which was due in 2014, campaigns were being conducted in every governorate with the cooperation of UNICEF in order to prevent such practices and protect the 60,000 or so children who could be subjected to them in the future.

43. It was NGOs, rather than the Government, that organized meetings of the Children's Parliament in State and private schools. The Government could not, therefore, be held responsible if boys were better represented than girls. The Children's Council of Ministers, which had continued to meet, allowed minors to participate in the political life of the country. Moreover, the possibility of creating a "laboratory" on the rights of the child was being considered in order to enable minors to be involved in all decisions affecting them.

44. **Ms. Oviedo Fierro** asked whether the State party intended to criminalize female genital mutilation and early marriage.

45. **Mr. Baoom** (Yemen) said that early marriage and female genital mutilation were punishable by law. Furthermore, all persons authorized to conduct weddings were made aware of the issue of early marriage, particularly in the governorates where the number of unions of that kind was high. UNICEF had invested US\$ 700,000 in the development of awareness-raising campaigns, which should be launched in 2014 and 2015. Many campaigns were also being conducted for children deprived of a family environment, who

were placed with foster families. Widows who raised children received financial support, and orphans were cared for under the *kafalah* system. Street children received psychosocial support in foster homes. There was no adoption programme for non-Muslim children in Yemen.

46. Child victims of trafficking from countries in the Horn of Africa were cared for until their return to their family of origin. Extensive information campaigns had been conducted in communities and mosques, and among persons who worked with children to combat child trafficking. His Government regretted the fact that cooperation with Saudi Arabia in that domain had ended as a result of a lack of participation by the Government of Saudi Arabia. Once arrested, persons responsible for human trafficking were brought to justice, but punishments did not have a deterrent effect. The anti-trafficking bill provided for much heavier penalties, ranging from substantial fines to 10-year prison sentences, for the perpetrators of such acts, even when they were family members.

47. As part of the reform of the juvenile justice system, there were plans to raise the age of criminal responsibility to 18 and establish juvenile courts. Offenders aged between 15 and 18 were currently held separately from adults. In many governorates, the emphasis was placed on reparative justice, and the number of convictions of minors had fallen significantly.

48. **Mr. Cardona Llorens** asked whether the 600 children currently detained were kept apart from adults in all circumstances, including during recreation and mealtimes, and whether, once the reform of the juvenile justice system had been finalized, it would be possible to prosecute young persons aged between 15 and 18.

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49. **Mr. Mezmur** (Country Rapporteur for the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict) asked whether the Supreme Council for Motherhood and Childhood was able to effectively coordinate the implementation of the Protocol with the Ministry of the Interior, and whether military personnel, immigration officers and law enforcement officials received training in human rights and international humanitarian law. He wished to know how many children had been recruited into the Yemeni armed forces and non-State armed groups, and how many minors participated in hostilities. He also asked what action had been taken in response to the November 2011 decree issued by the defector General Ali Mohsen Al-Ahmar, ordering the demobilization and return to their families of around 100 child combatants.

50. The delegation of Yemen might wish to indicate whether legislation prohibited and punished the recruitment of minors and their use in armed conflict, and whether it was true that the provisions allowing persons who recruited a minor to be tried as war criminals were only applicable in time of war. The delegation might also clarify the role of the National Dialogue Conference in implementing the Protocol and, in particular, indicate whether it worked to promote sustainable livelihoods in order to prevent the recruitment of children from poor families by the army or non-State armed groups.

51. The Committee would appreciate additional information on measures taken by the State party to protect children from anti-personnel mines, explosive remnants of war, suicide bombings and drone strikes. In that regard, he wished to know whether the Government of Yemen had contacted the Government of the United States of America, which was responsible for the majority of drone strikes, to try to put an end to the strikes and thereby protect the right to life, survival and physical integrity of Yemeni children.

52. The delegation might indicate what method was used to verify the age of recruits, and what sanctions were imposed on persons who flouted the verification procedures during recruitment into the armed forces. Lastly, he would welcome further information on the demobilization of children, particularly girls, and on measures taken to facilitate their social reintegration and physical and psychological recovery.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.