

Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

Memorandum from International Peace Bureau

Appendix A: CASE STUDY OF ETHIOPIA

At the 43rd Session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child held in September 2006 the IPB focused its attention on three State Parties being reviewed at that session: Ethiopia, Congo (Brazzaville), and Senegal.

This paper summarises the CRC's discussion on Ethiopia, and its implications for the wider argument for attention to military spending being put forward by IPB.

ETHIOPIA

Background

Ethiopia has some of the world's highest rates of infant mortality. Malaria and malnutrition are rife. About 2.5 million people need emergency supplies of water and sanitation. Ethiopia is home to more than 4.5 million orphans (many of them caused by war or HIV/AIDS) and to other vulnerable children including refugees.

CRC reviews of Ethiopia

At the CRC Session in September 2006 Ethiopia was reviewed for the third time. The main request put to Ethiopia by the CRC was to submit more complete information on its progress in promoting childrens' welfare, both in terms of statistical reporting and in terms of programmes, in priority areas such as education, health, justice, assistance for children involved in warfare, demobilised, street/refugee children, sexual abuse, orphans etc.

The CRC's conclusions show that while they thought some progress had been made since their last review (in 2001) a great deal still needed to be done. This is illustrated by remarks made by CRC expert members as recorded in the Summary Records and Concluding Observations.

Summary Records

(CRC/C/SR.1162) Ms Aluoch (Country Rapporteur) regretted that Ethiopia's State Party Report gave no indication of how the national budget was allocated to childrens' needs. Given the absence of a birth registration system, how could the Ethiopian Government know how many children there are in Ethiopia? What proportion of social spending is used to implement the CRC, in priority area such as health, education and special protection measures?

(CRC/C/SR.1164) The Ethiopian delegation was asked, regarding children in armed conflict, what measures were available to monitor the human rights of children in armed conflict, to ensure that they do not take part in armed conflict, and that civilian children caught up between warring parties are protected? What provisions for international humanitarian law are applicable to children? Are there peace corridors, or days of tranquility, enabling the evacuation of children in time of war? What programmes exist for orphans affected by armed conflict or adoption?

Concluding Observations

(EFS/CRC/C/ETH/CO/3) The CRC welcomed Ethiopia's State Party Report (CRC/C/129 Add 8) and its Written Replies to the List of Issues (CRC/C/Q/ETH/3 and Add 1 – statistics on education and child promotion activities). It appreciated the

constructive dialogue with a high level, cross-sectional delegation. It welcomed Ethiopia's ratification of the Ottawa Land Mines Convention. However, it recorded the following:

- *while it welcomed the increased budget allocation to education and health, it was concerned that resources are insufficient for improving the protection of childrens' rights*. In particular, it noted the considerable military expenditure in contrast to the allocations to education and health.*
- it was concerned at the lack of data on children in a number of areas, eg on children involved in armed conflicts
- it urged the Ethiopian government to seek technical assistance from UNICEF in collecting disaggregated data, especially in relation to childrens' priority areas
- it urged more effort to disseminate and promote the Convention and involve civil society in this
- it noted that 18 is the minimum age for military recruitment, but that there are possible gaps due to the lack of adequate birth registration
- it was concerned at the lack of physical and psychological assistance for children affected by armed conflict
- it urged Ethiopia to support the operation of UNMEE to seek a sustainable peace in the region
- it noted the lack of measures for street children, children abducted and sold (for\$2 each) for "unknown purposes", and to eliminate child labour from as early as 5 years old
- it recommended that Ethiopia ratify the Convention's Optional Protocols on Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, and on Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict
- * In its Concluding Observations at the previous CRC Session (2001) the CRC recorded that it was deeply concerned, in the context of high military expenditure, that Ethiopia "has not sought to implement the CRC to the maximum extent of available resources".

Comment

Ethiopia's statistics submitted to the latest CRC Session cover essentially education and health expenditures only. Moreover, these are indicated solely in the national currency, and are not given as a percentage of the national budget.

Regarding its military expenditures, Ethiopia has never participated in the UN Standardised Instrument for Reporting on Military Expenditures. Ethiopia has not participated in the UN Register of Conventional Arms since 1968. Ethiopia does not participate in any regional talks aimed at reducing military spending. The details of the military budget are not available to the general public.

UNDP figures estimate Ethiopian public expenditures as follows (% of GDP):

- Education (2000-2002) : 4.6%
- Health (2002) : 2.6%
- Military (2003) : 4.3% (down from 8.5% in 1990)

Military expenditure declined over the period 1990 – 2003. Spending on education and health has increased, but remains at a low level.

The CRC review process for Ethiopia shows that it has been unable so far to achieve much greater transparency or coverage in Ethiopian provision of statistics, particularly with regard to military expenditure. CRC pressure for disaggregation of statistics continues. But the apparent absence of a CRC standardised, comprehensive, reporting Format for State Party reports to the CRC does not help.

The CRC process does however, contribute to general pressure on the Ethiopian Government to make progress on increasing resources and attention to promoting childrens' welfare and rights – and away from military spending. NGOs can help to increase this CRC pressure by

- reinforcing efforts to achieve greater statistical transparency, and
- highlighting the negative effect on childrens' welfare of excessive military spending and secrecy.

Final remark: Recent dramatic events in the Horn of Africa involving the Ethiopian military in our view give particular pertinence and relevance to the above observations.

Geneva, 12 January 2007