

RAJSHAHI UNIVERSITY LAW JOURNAL



FACULTY OF LAW
RAJSHAHI UNIVERSITY

2006

ARTICLES

Dower in history and its significance in Islamic law

The Emergence of Plantation Labour in Bengal: A historical and legal study

The Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989: Its Success or Failure after 17 years

The concept of Islamic Law and its application in Bangladesh

Hiring and Firing of Securities Regulators in Bangladesh and Australia: A Comparative Review

Rights and Care for Elderly People : Bangladesh Perspective

The Law of Maintenance and its Implementation in Bangladesh: A Comparative Study

The Nexus between Electronic and Paper Evidence under the Evidence Act, 1872

Inheritance of Orphan Grandchildren under Islamic law of Succession: A study of the impact of section 4 of the Muslim Family Laws Ordinance, 1961

পঞ্চম জাতীয় সংসদে গঠিত কতিপয় গুরুত্বপূর্ণ কমিটি: একটি পর্যালোচনা

বাংলাদেশের শিকস্তি ও পয়স্তি আইন : একটি পর্যালোচনা

ইসলামে মোহরানার অধিকার ও বাংলাদেশের আর্থসামাজিক প্রেক্ষাপট : একটি পর্যালোচনা

সাইবার ক্রাইম : আইন প্রয়োগ, সমস্যা ও উত্তরণের উপায় অনুসন্ধান

শিশু নির্যাতন এবং শিশু অধিকার : প্রেক্ষিত বাংলাদেশ

বাংলাদেশে টিপাইমুখ বাঁধ এর প্রভাব : একটি আইনী পর্যালোচনা

Abstract on the Project Legal Rights of the Child: Policy and Enforcement in Bangladesh, 1995

ISSN 1991-8976

Rajshahi University Law Journal

Volume 03 2006

Published by:

Dean

Faculty of Law

Rajshahi University

Rajshahi- 6205

Bangladesh



FACULTY OF LAW
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Rajshahi University Law Journal 2006

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Cover Design & Printed by

B T S Commercial Institute

Benodpur Bazar, Rajshahi

Printed at:

Barendra Printing Press & Packaging

Sapora, Rajshahi

Subscription Rates

For Individuals: Tk. 100.00 US\$ 20 (without postage)

For Organisation: Tk. 150.00 US\$ 30 (without postage)

[Published in December 2006]

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The Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989: Its Success or Failure after 17 years

Dr. M Abdul Hannan*
M Ahsan Habib**

Origin and development of the Convention

In 1924, the fifth Assembly of the League of Nations adopted the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, 1924 which was the foundation of the save the children concept. In 1959 United Nations (UN) General Assembly had taken steps to a declaration on the Rights of the Children. In the same year United Nations General Assembly adopted a declaration on the rights of the child. They were not, however, legally binding upon the States and constituted only statement of principles. In 1966 two covenant, namely, International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) were adopted. In particular Article 23 & 24 of ICCPR and Article 10 of ICESCR deal with the welfare of the children. In the late 1970, some States, particularly the government of Poland, began to argue for the creation of a new instrument on the Children's Right that would not only set guiding principles, but also binding States under international law. In 1978, during its 34th session, the Commission on Human Rights (UNCHR) started its concern that children continued to suffer around the world under colonial rule and apartheid regimes, war and other forms of aggression, and agreed to strengthen international instruments for protecting the Rights of the Children. In 1979, twenty years after the adoption of the Declaration of the Rights of the Children, the General Assembly concluded that "The principle of the declaration have played a significant part in the promotion of the Rights of the Children in the entire world as well as in shaping various forms of international cooperation in this sphere (UN doc. A/33/45). In that particular year the General Assembly declared the year 1979 as the International year of the Child, and the UNCHR established a working group to draft a convention on Children's Rights.

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The working group based its project upon the principles enshrined in past declarations, and cooperated with UN member States, specialized UN agencies, non-governmental organizations, and regional inter-governmental organizations in the drafting process of the Convention. In December 1988, the working group adopted a draft Convention on the Rights of the Child and submitted it to the UN General Assembly for consideration. The reports of the Working Group are very valuable guides to interpretation of the terms of the Convention, particularly its final report.¹

In 1979 drafting process of the Convention had started and it took twenty years for a formal Declaration by the General Assembly. The UN General Assembly adopted the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) on 20 November 1989,² and opened the Convention for ratification on 26 January 1990. It is to be noted that, 61 states signed up to it on the day that it was opened for signature. After the minimum numbers of ratifications needed the CRC entered into force on 2 September 1990. Since then, 192 nations have ratified the Convention except the United States and Somalia. This is the most widely endorsed Human Rights treaty in history. Though the Convention is not the first international instruments on the rights of the child but it is significant in a number of respects.³

The Contents of the Convention

The CRC consist of a preamble and 54 Articles, which is divided into three parts. Part one (Article 1 to 45) contains the substantive provisions of the Convention dealing with the general obligations of the State parties and the specific rights guaranteed to Children. There are four categories of Rights enshrined in this part. They are (a) protection from Rights of the Children (b) providing survival Rights (c) prevention from harmful acts of national activities (d) participating.⁴ Part two (Article 42 to 45) of the Convention contains the implementation procedure of the Convention. Part three (Article 46 to 54) contains clauses concerning ratification and accession, entry into force, reservation and amendments.

¹ Le Blance, *The Convention on the Rights of the Child*, 1995 (Chapter 3&5)

² Van Bueren, *The International Law on the Rights of the Child* (London: 1995)

³ United Nations Action in the field of Human Rights, 242-245(1988)

⁴ Van Bueren, *The International Law on the Rights of the Child* (London: 1995)

Although the principles of the Convention include a wide range of civil, political, economic, social and cultural Rights, Articles 2, 3, 5, 6 and 12 enshrine the key provision of the Convention. Article 2 of the Convention focused on non-discrimination. It states that, "State parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that the child is protected against all forms of discrimination or punishment on the basis of the status, activities, expressed opinion, or belief of the child's parents, legal guardians, or family members." Under this Article, all children are entitled to equal rights and opportunities.

Article 3 of the Convention is of fundamental importance to the whole Convention because it contains the general standard which underpins the application of the rights guaranteed. It deals with the principle the "best interest of the child". Article 3 states that "in all action concerning children...the best interest of the child shall be a primary consideration." As a result, social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative bodies, and legislative are all compelled to act in the best interest of the child when taking action involving a child. This Article covers instances when the rights of the child conflict with the prerogatives of parents and guardians and with those of the state. Article 3 calls for the best interest of the child to prevail in each of these circumstances.

Article 5 provides for the appropriate direction and guidance of the children. It states that, "States parties shall respect the responsibilities, rights and duties of parents or, where applicable, the members of the extended family or community as provided for the local custom, legal guardians or other persons legally responsible for the child, to provide, in a manner consistent with the evolving capacities of the child, appropriate direction and guidance in the exercise by the child of the rights recognized in the present Convention."⁵

Article 6 provides that every child has the inherent right to life, and the State shall ensure to the maximum extent possible survival and development of the child. Article 6 holds that, "every child has the inherent right to life" and "State parties shall ensure to the maximum extent possible in the survival and development of the child". In this sense, the right to life is given further emphasis by ensuring the child's rights to survival and development. The

⁵ See, final report, paras 178-85

right to development means not only physical development, but also mental, emotional, social, cognitive, and cultural development or may extend to the concept of the right to development contained in the "United Nations Declaration on the Rights to Development" which defines as an 'inalienable human right by virtue of which every human person and all peoples are entitled to participate in, contribute to, and enjoy economic, social, cultural and political development, in which all human rights and fundamental freedom can be fully realized.' To this end, Article 31 recognizes the right of the child to rest, leisure, play, and participation in cultural life and the arts.

Article 12 deals with the right to the traditional action (right to express the views).⁶ Specially the article holds that "State parties shall assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child, the views of the child being given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child... the child shall in particular be provided with the opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting him or her..." This article also provides for the girl child's participation in matters relating to herself, but it also provides the child's right to freedom of expression. Furthermore, it works to ensure that the child can participate in determining what is in her best interest.

In addition to these provisions, the Convention also provides with the following rights. The important rights ensured by the Convention are as follows: the right to preserve identity (Article 8); right not to be separate from his or her parents against his or her will (Article 9); freedom of expression (Article 13); freedom of thought, conscience and religion (Article 14); freedom of association and assembly (Article 15); right to privacy (Article 16); the right to be free from physical or mental harm and neglect, including sexual abuse or exploitation (Article 19 and 34); the right to the highest attainable standard of health (Article 24); the right to social security (Article 26); the right to adequate standard of living (Article 27); the right to education on the basis of equal opportunity (Article 28); the right to be free from economic exploitation and from work that may interfere with the child's education or be harmful to her health or well-being (Article 32); the right to be protected against narcotic drugs (Article 33); the right to be protected

⁶ See, final report, paras 268-79

against torture or other cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment or punishment (Article 37); and the right to be free from compulsory military service, if under the age of 15 (Article 38). The provision relating age limit has changed to 18 years by Optional protocol to the Convention in 2002.

Part 2 of the Convention contains the provision on implementation of the Convention. Article 42 requires States to make the provision and principle of the Convention widely known to adults and children. Such a publicity provision is important because the contents of the Convention is not widely known and the Human Rights Committee has continually stressed the need for States to publicize the treaty and translate it into the various languages.

To monitor the progress made by the State parties in implementing the Convention, the CRC, pursuant to Article 43, established the Committee on the Rights of the Child (The CRC committee). The principle function of the Committee is to operate the system of periodic reporting provided for in Articles 44-45. The CRC Committee helps States in structuring their own domestic legislation relating to the CRC. The CRC Committee also promotes public accountability by raising the awareness of important issues like child labour and prostitution.

Failure or Success

The Convention is the most widely endorsed human rights treaty in the history of the Convention. The Convention marks an important milestone. The rights of the child are recognized as never before. The Convention itself also possesses a challenge for the government and civil society to take stronger action to implement its provisions. The rapid growth of special institutions and other organizations specializing in children's rights, for example, has resulted in a powerful voice for raising awareness of children's rights worldwide. Furthermore, following the Convention State parties increasingly are adopting National plans of Action to enforce children's rights in health, education, nutrition, and other areas. For example, Costa Rica uses a system called a "social rights audit," not only to monitor and evaluate the country's compliance with the Convention, but also to involve children and communities in the process of analysing the current state of children's rights and then proposing solutions to the problem.

The Convention together with its Optional Protocol lays in specific terms the legal duties of the government to the children. Children's survival,

development and protection are now no longer matter of charitable concern but of moral and legal obligation. Governments are held to account for their care of children by an international body the CRC to which they have agreed to report regularly. In recent years, world leaders have not only reaffirmed and expanded those commitments but have also set specific time bound goals as a frame work for meeting them. The latest such commitments were made at the Millennium Summit in September 2000, from which the millennium declaration and subsequently, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) emerged with a deadline of 2015 and the UN General Assembly special session on children in May 2002, which resulted in the outcome documents, "A World Fit for Children". These two compacts complement each other and taken together form a strategy- a millennium agenda for protecting children in the opening year of 21st century.

Despite the nearly universal ratification of the Convention on the rights of the child, the global scandal of violence against children is a horror story too often untold. With malice and clear intent, violence is used against the members of society least able to protect themselves- children in school, in orphanage, on the street, in refuge camps and ear zones, in detention, and in field and factories. In its investigations of human rights abuses against children, Human Rights Watch has found that in every region of the world, in almost every aspect of their lives, children are subject to unconditional violence, most often perpetrated by the very individual charged with their safety and well-being.

Children are exposed to other human rights abuses as well. Millions have no access to education, work long hours under hazardous conditions, are forced to become soldiers, or languish in orphanages or detention centre where they endure inhuman conditions and daily assaults on their dignity.

The grim picture of the exclusion from the rights of the child are as given below:

Right to education

The Convention established that children enjoy the right to education. The state party promises to ensure facilities to the children. Instead of facilitating healthy development of the children and providing them with equal opportunities for education, schools are too often sites of intolerance and discrimination.

In some cases, school officials failed to protect students from harassment or attack by the classmates. In others, they themselves participated in harassment or violence against particular youth because of their gender, race, ethnicity, religion, nationality, sexual orientation, social group or other status.

In many countries, girls are less likely to attend school than boys, particularly in higher education. In 2005, 54 countries were found to require additional effort to ensure equal opportunity in education.⁷ Gender gaps in secondary school are even more pronounced, of 47 developing countries survey by the UNICEF, only 22 were on course which met the target of parity at secondary school level, while 25 were far from that target. Girl's exclusion from education in comparison to boys- especially in South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and the Middle East and North Africa- is one the clearest statistical indicator of gender discrimination. The street children are often excluded from the right to education. The exact number of street children is impossible to quantify, but in figure it runs into ten millions across the world.⁸

In many parts of the world, children from minorities and other social disadvantaged groups are denied education or segregated in inferior educational programs that limited their opportunities for growth and restricted their access to higher education and employment. There are an estimated 150 million children with disabilities in the world. The vast majority of children with disabilities in the developing world have no access to education.⁹

Corporal punishment is permitted as a method of school discipline in at least sixty-five countries, according to End Physical Punishment of Children (EPOCH) world-wide. Children are spanked, slapped, caned, strapped, or beaten by teacher as a result of misbehaviour, poor academic performance, or sometimes for no reason at all which creates physical or mental harm to the children.

⁷ Ibid, p 16-17

⁸ United Nations Millennium Project, *A home in the City: Taskforce report on improving the living of slum dwellers*, Executive summary, Earthscan, London/ Stearling, VA 2005, p.10

⁹ NGO/ UNICEF Regional Network for Children, *Leave no children out* campaign.op.cit.pp.18.19

Right to life

Issues directly related to life as it has been traditionally conceived are dealt with in several places in the Convention. As noted above, Article 6(1) states, "Every child has the inherent right to life." Understood in its simplest, meaning, this statement is surely be universally applicable. But children around the world are excluded from the right to life. In 2004, 4.3 million children – one out of every six lives birth- died before the age of five. Children also die in arm conflict. This rate is alarming, of 12 countries where 20 percent or more children die before the age of five, nine has suffered a major arm conflict. Death causes to the children due to poverty and inadequate health care in the developing countries around the world.

HIV/AIDS continued to pose an acute threat of children's right to life, unlike many virulent epidemics in the history that have killed mainly young children. Moreover, application of death penalty to 'minors' has attracted a great deal of attention in recent years. NGOs such as Amnesty international and International Commission of Jurists, as well as a number of scholars have raised their voice to ban death penalty, which is enshrined in Article 37. Many countries around the world impose death penalty upon the children, which violates their right to life.

Child soldiers

The Optional Protocol to the Convention by the UN General Assembly in May 2002, established 18 as the minimum age for direct participation in arm conflict, which was earlier 15 years under the Convention for forced or compulsory recruitment and for any recruitment of use by non-governmental arms group. Having reached the ten members needed the Protocol entered into force in February 2003.

The children are being used in arm conflict. Hundreds of thousands of children are caught up in arm conflict as combatants, messengers, porters, cooks and sex slaves for armed forces and groups.¹⁰ Some are abducted or forcibly recruited; or others are driven to join by poverty, abuse and discrimination or by the desire to seek revenge for violence enacted against

¹⁰ The United Nations Children Fund, *The state of the world's children* 2005.op.cit.pp.41.42

family.¹¹ While under the control of the armed groups, these children are excluded from essential services and protection.

Ending the recruitments of the child soldiers and returning them to their families and communities is an obvious prerequisite for them to gain inclusion and prevent further violations of their rights. Disarmaments, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) programs use a variety of interventions, ranging from back to school initiatives to psychosocial support. Stigmatization can be reduced when reintegration support targets the community as a whole. But despite of these initiatives, many obstacles to the full reintegration of child soldiers remain.

Girls are often not considered real soldiers because they perform non-combat functions. Moreover, girls abducted or forcibly recruited who return with babies born in captivity may be rejected by their families and communities because of stigma attached to rape and to giving birth to so called 'War babies' or 'babies born of rape'.

UNICEF coordinated the demobilization of over 2500 children between the age of eight and eighteen from the Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) in southern Sudan. However, the recruitment and use of children remained a global problem. The coalition to stop the use of child soldiers released its first global survey in June 2001, finding that half a million children were subject to national armed forces, paramilitaries, or non-state armed groups in total eighty seven countries and at least 3,00000 of children were actively participating in armed conflict in forty one countries. In December 2000 UN reports estimated that between 15 to 30 percent of all newly recruited combatants in the Democratic Republic of Congo were children under eighteen years of age and a substantial of them were under the age of twelve.

Sexual abuses and exploitation

Children around the world are sexually abused and exploited in ways that can cause permanent physical and psychological harm. In some cases, police demand sexual services from the street children, threatening them with arrest if they don't comply with their demand. In detention and correctional facilities children are being sexually abused by staff or are not protected

¹¹ Ibid, p .44

from sexual abuses by other inmates. In refugee camps many children are exploited by the adults or sometimes forced to sell bodies for food. Children working as domestics may be assaulted or raped by employers. This grim picture is compounded by the use of children as prostitutes in countries throughout the world. An unknown but very large number of children are used for commercial purposes every year. Moreover, child prostitutes are treated as criminal by law enforcing and judicial authorities rather than as children who are victim of sexual exploitation.

Children in conflict with the law

In 17 years since the adoption of the Convention on the right of the child, a growing number of countries have modified their juvenile justice law. This trend has been most evident in Latin America, where many countries have enacted reforms to bring their legislation into compliance with the Convention. Brazil was one of the first to reform its national law. Far too often, children around the world are brought to trial and sentenced in way that violate their right under Article 40 of the Convention. In India we often find that police regularly detain street children without charging them with any offence.

Torture during Police interrogation

In many countries, children are detained by police without sufficient cause, for too long, without notification to their parents or guardians, or simply as a mechanism of intimidation. Such detention is often accompanied by brutal interrogations and torture. Illegal conduct by police is rarely prosecuted, even when children die in custody. This impunity contributes to conditions for further police abuse of children. Additional factors contributing to such practices include police prejudices¹², poor pay and improperly trained police forces, and a culture of violence within police departments that fosters abusive behaviour. Violence against the children in detention is being addressed in the United Nations Secretary General Study on violence against children, the report of which is released in 2006.

Child labour

An estimated 246 million children between 5 and 17 are engaged in child labour according to estimates from International Labour Organization (ILO)

¹² For instance against street children, Roma, or members of other minorities.

in the year 2002. Of these, nearly 70 percent or 171 million children were working in hazardous situation or condition, such as mines, with chemicals, pesticides in agriculture or with dangerous machineries. Some 75 millions of them were less than 10 years old.¹³ Their physical immaturity left them more exposed to work related illness and injuries than adults, and they may have been less aware of risk involved in their occupation and place of work. Illness and injuries include puncture, broken or complete loss of body parts, burns and skin disease, eye and hearing impairment, respiratory and gastrointestinal illness, fever and head ache from excessive heat in the field or in factories. But it is not only injury or sickness but even death that children risk when involved in hazardous labour.

An estimated 8.4 million children work under horrific circumstances, they are forced into debt bondage, or other forms of slavery, into prostitution and pornography or into participation in armed conflict or other illicit activities.¹⁴ According to ILO, "forced labour is present in all regions and kinds of economy---the offence of exacting forced labour is very rarely punished---for the most part there is neither official data on the incidence of forced labour, nor a widespread awareness among the society at large that forced labour is a problem. It remains, with very few exceptions, one of the most hidden problem of our times."¹⁵

The number of children involved in domestic services around the world is unquantifiable because of the hidden nature of the work, but it certainly runs into the million. All too often domestic services become a 24 hours job, with the child perpetually on call and subject to the whims of all family members.¹⁶

In addition children in domestic service are especially susceptible to physical and psychological harm. The food they are given are too often nutritionally

¹³ International Labour Organization, International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour, Statistical Information and Monitoring Programme on Child Labour, Every Child Counts: New global estimates on child Labour, Summary of highlights, ILO/ IPEC/ SIMPOC, Geneva, 2002, pp.8.12.

¹⁴ International Labour Organization, Every child counts, op. cit. pp. 8.12

¹⁵ International Labour Organization, A Global Alliance against Labour, op. cit. p.17

¹⁶ International Labour Organization, International Programme on the Elimination of child labour, Helping Hands or Shackled Lives? Understanding child

inadequate and inferior to the meals eaten by the employing family. In Haiti, for example 15 years old domestic workers were found to be on average 4 centimetres shorter and 40 pound lighter than 15 years old child not in domestic service in the same area.¹⁷ Children frequently suffer physical abuse or punishment. They are at extreme risk of sexual abuse. Rapid assessment research in El Salvador found that 66 percent of girls in domestic services reported having been physically or psychologically abused, many of them sexually, and that the threat of sexual advances from employers was ever present.¹⁸

Refugee and Displaced children

At the end of 2004, roughly 48 percent of all refugees world-wide were children.¹⁹ During the same year, the total number of people displaced with their own countries by conflict or human rights violations amounted to roughly 25 millions.²⁰ Refugee and internally displaced children face many risk given the violence and uncertainty surrounding both their flight and their lives in country and/or place of asylum. They may become separated from their families, lose their homes and find themselves in a poor living condition that jeopardize their health and education. They are often unable to prove their right to receive basic social services as education, health or to work in different part of the country.²¹ Refugee girls are at the risk of abduction, trafficking, and sexual violence, including rape used as a weapon of war.

Primary responsibility for both refugee and displaced children lies with national government. However, the office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) has mandate to assist and protect

Domestic Labour and Responses to it, ILO/ IPEC, Geneva, June 2004,p.20, foot note.25

¹⁷ Ibid, p. 51

¹⁸ Organization Internacional del Trabajo, Programa Internacional Para la Erradicacion del Trabajo Infantil, El Salvador, Trabajo infantil domestico: una evaluacion rapida, ILO/ IPEC, Geneva, February, 2002, p. 11

¹⁹ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights,2004,Global Refugee trends: Overview of refugee populations, new arrivals, durable solutions, asylum-seekers, stateless and other persons of concern to UNCHR, UNCHR, Geneva, June 2005, p. 2

²⁰ Norwegianan Refugee Council, Internal displacement Global overview of trends and development in 2004, Global IDP Project, Geneva, 2004,p. 9

refugees, while the International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC) has a mandate to assist the refugees or displaced people. The International Community and UNCHR have developed a wealth of international norms, policies and guideline to improve the protections and care of the refugee children. In practice, however, there is still a gap in their application and implementation, due to resource constraints, uneven priorities and accountability, at the level of institutions as well as in the international community.²²

Westernisation of child policy

The Convention provides universal standard of living to which State parties must comply. It presupposes a model of childhood that is universally applicable, "based on the notion that children everywhere have the same basic needs and that these can be met with a standard set of responses."²³ More specially, the Convention represents an Americanisation child policy globally. Although, it is highlighted that it was Poland that proposed and submitted a draft convention on the rights of the child and chaired the working group that drafted the Convention,²⁴ nevertheless, the universal standard of the final text is based on a western concept of childhood. It emphasises causes and solutions of Anglo-American social policies at the level of the individual through professional intervention and de-emphasises the influence of the wider social, economic, political and cultural circumstances.²⁵ For the westernised child policy children in developing countries, where the majority of the population is young, are far away from those rights ensured by the Convention.

²¹ United Nations Children's Fund, 'UNICEF and Displacement : A Guidance note', UNICEF, Department of Emergency Operation, New York, 2005, p. 2

²² Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's programme, 'Agenda for Protection', UNCHR, June 2002, EC/52/SC/CRP.9/Rev. 1

²³ Boyden, Jo (1994) 'Children's Experience of conflict Related Emergencies: Some implications for Relief policy and Practice' *Disaster*, vol.18, no.3, p.256

²⁴ Van Bueren, Geraldine (1995) *The International Law on the Rights of the Child*, Dordrecht : Martinus Nijhoff, p.14

²⁵ Boyden, Jo (1992), 'Childhood and the Policy Maker: A Comparative Perspective on the Globalization of Childhood' in Allison James and Alan Prout(eds) *Constructing and Reconstructing Childhood: Contemporary Issues in the Sociological Study of Childhood*. London: Flamer Press, pp.184.215

Conclusion

In many countries around the world, children make up more than half of the population. Yet nowhere are they safe. Life-threatening abuses are perpetrated against children on the streets, in schools, in the workplace, in institutions, and in combat zones. Nearly every country in the world is now party to the Convention and many have taken significant and concrete steps to end abuses of children. For too many children, the promises of the Convention remain hollow and the abuses they endure every day contradict the commitments made by their governments.

Since the adoption, the Convention presents a challenge to governments world-wide: to take all necessary steps to ensure that the rights of children are not just an abstract concept but a concrete reality for their youngest citizens. The recommendations presented in the final report of the working group outline steps that can make a real difference in the lives of children.

The role of citizens and non-governmental organizations is no less important. Children too often lack a voice in the political sphere and need advocates working on their behalf. Concerned individuals can contact representatives of their government to discuss the recommendations in the final report and press for public commitments to stronger actions for children. Citizens, different organizations and media can also help raise awareness within civil society against the appalling abuses of children and join together in coalitions to take constructive action.

Only concerted efforts by governments and civil society together can effectively receive the MGDs by 2015 and end the abuse and exploitation of children. We must keep our promises and fulfil the basic rights of children.