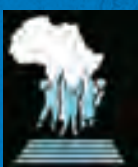




# Mid-Term Review of the African Common Position on Children

## "An Africa fit for children"

National consultations of Children's Organizations and Movements  
Summary Report • September 2007



Plan



# Acknowledgement

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# List of abbreviations

<b>AEJT</b>	Association of child and young workers
<b>CADBEE</b>	African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Children
<b>CDE</b>	Convention on the Rights of Children
<b>CONAFE</b>	Coalition of African NGO for Children
<b>CSB</b>	Basic Health Center
<b>IEC</b>	Information, Education, Communication
<b>OEV</b>	Orphans and other vulnerable children
<b>ONG</b>	Non Governmental Organizations
<b>OUA</b>	Organization of African Unity
<b>RCA</b>	Republic of Central Africa
<b>RDC</b>	Democratic Republic of Congo
<b>SIDA</b>	Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome
<b>SR</b>	No answer
<b>UA</b>	African Union
	Human Immunodeficiency Virus

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# Introduction

From the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 10<sup>th</sup> of May 2002, The United Nations, New York held a Special Session on Children.

This global event which brought together several Heads of State, and NGO representatives, saw world leaders make common commitments within a Declaration and a Plan of Action that launched an urgent appeal to the international community to offer a better future to each child.

In the Prelude to the Special Session, Member States of the Organization of African Unity, accredited African and International institutions and the civil society organizations adopted a common African Position in the 1st Pan African Forum on the future of children, held in Cairo (Egypt) from the 28<sup>th</sup> to the 31<sup>st</sup> of May 2001. This African contribution was submitted to the United Nations General Assembly Special Session on Children referred to above.

Since then some progress has been made in several areas, namely education, health, the fight against violence against children, including the work to bring national legislations in line with the ratified international conventions. However, numerous challenges still remain to be addressed concerning children in Africa.

The present consultations aim to involve children across Africa in the mid-term evaluation of the actions carried out in the framework of the implementation of the Declaration and plan of action « An Africa fit for children » and to make recommendations for the acceleration of the promotion of the Rights of the Child in Africa.

Hence, children belonging to child organizations and movements from the following countries gave a verdict on progress made and the obstacles hindering the full development of the African child: Benin, Burkina-Faso Central African Republic, Chad Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Liberia, Mauritius, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mali, Senegal, Guinea, Madagascar, Niger, RD Congo, , South Africa, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda Togo, Guinea Bissau, Cameroon and The African Movement of Working Children.

In those countries, days of consultations of child organizations and movements were organized during which children, facilitated by ANPPCAN or CANGOC member NGOs, responded to twelve questions on the institutional aspect, as well as issues related to health, HIV/AIDS, education, protection, and child participation.

In each country, after the presentation of the objectives of the consultation and of the issues to be discussed, children broke into working groups, the group reports were later presented for discussion and adopted in plenary.

This report is a summary of the issues that emerged from the national consultations which took place during August and September 2007, as documented by the children in these consultations. It highlights the difficulties confronting child organizations and movements in the accomplishment of their mission and the recommendations formulated by children for themselves and for their organisations, for adults and their organizations, for governments and the authorities, and for the international community and the private sector.



# I. Brief overview of the common African position « An Africa fit for children » and presentation of the objectives of the national consultations

## 1.1 • The common African position « An Africa fit for children »

The member states of the Organization of African Unity and accredited International and civil society organizations, adopted an African Common Position in the Pan African forum on the future of children held in Cairo (Egypt), from 28th to 31st May 2001.

The Common African Position articulates a number of priorities aimed at improving the quality of life of the child and taking appropriate measures to ensure that each child has a good start in life, grows and develops in an environment which permits the child to develop his potential to accept peace, security and dignity.

To realize this objective, the following activities must be undertaken:

- The eradication of HIV/AIDS to ensure the rights of children to survival and development
- The achievement of the right to education to allow each child to realize his/her full potential
- To right to protection: The legal protection outside situations of armed conflict and foreign occupation is essential, protection of children against violence, the lack
  - of medical care, mistreatment and sexual exploitation
- The participation of the youth and children etc...

The common African Position accords value to the partnership between governments and civil society organizations in the implementation of their commitments but also and in particular the periodic evaluation of this position.

## 1.2 • Objectives of the national consultations of child organizations and movements

The national consultations of child organizations and movements were aimed at four objectives, namely:

- Mobilize and inform African child organizations and movements on the commitments of the common African position;
- Make an inventory of the implementation of “An Africa fit for children” Plan of Action;
- Make recommendations for the implementation of the second five year period of the Plan of Action;
- Illustrate through a film the consultations of child organizations and movements.

1 • OUA Organisation de l'Union Africaine est actuellement UA, Union Africaine



# II. Presentation of the results of the national consultations

## 2.1 • Participants in the national consultations

The national consultations allowed a large number of children to meet and discuss issues that affect them

The consultations involved more than 1000 children from the following countries: Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Liberia, Mauritius, Nigeria, Sierra Leone, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Kenya, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Mali, Senegal, Guinea, Central African Republic, Benin, Chad, Burkina Faso, Madagascar, Ivory Coast, Malawi, South Africa, Democratic republic of Congo, Togo, Niger, and Guinea Bissau. To this add a special session organized by the members of MAEJT with representatives from the following 12 countries; Rwanda, The Gambia and Cameroon, Ethiopia, and Ghana recorded the highest participation with 270 and 113 children respectively.

These children (girls and boys) of ages 12 to 18, were representatives of the Children's Parliaments, the Association of Working Children and Youths (AEJT) and several other associations and Children's Organizations.

The participants in these consultations included school children, children in difficult circumstances e.g. child laborers, child traders (young merchants), students from Koranic schools, farm labourers, (farm hands) all drawn from big towns as well as in the rural areas.

## 2.2 • Knowledge of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) and of the Common African Position on Children « An Africa fit for children »

Unanimously adopted by the Heads of States and Governments of OAU in 1990, the **ACRWC** came into force in November 1999. Its goal was to integrate an African perspective into the concept of Child Rights, thus completing the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The great majority of children who participated in the national consultations did not know these two documents, with the exception of Liberian, Sierra Leone and Nigerian children, 50% of whom affirm that they are familiar with them. Meanwhile the members of MAEJT know the two documents well having used them as working tools during Consultations for the GMC and Plan in 2005.

Hence, as it appears, the consultations were an opportunity for the majority of participants to discover the Common African Position on Children "An Africa Fit for Children", the implementation of which over a period of five years was to be the object of their verdict.

Also it appears that the better organized children are, the easier it is for them to gain better knowledge and understanding of the Policies which affect and concern them

## 2.3 • Institutional framework, policies and plan of action

On the institutional framework, from the opinion expressed by the children, it appears that most governments have taken initiatives to better take into consideration the needs of children by creating institutions in charge of child related issues in the various areas.

- There is a Ministry in charge of children in most of the countries involved in the consultations. However, certain countries like Sierra Leone, Ethiopia, Ghana, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, Benin, South Africa and the Democratic Republic of Congo, created a Children's office in the Ministries of Health and or Women (Gender.)
- A National Children Council was set up in Sierra Leone, Tanzania, Uganda, Madagascar, Benin and the DRC.
- An ombudsperson for the Office of Children is available in Mauritius, Ethiopia and the DRC. In the other countries, the children were unaware of the existence of such a mediator
- A Children's Parliament exists in Nigeria, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire, Mali, Senegal, Niger, Guinea, Madagascar, Burkina, DRC, and RCA. As regards the other countries they were either non-existent or not working properly.

Hospitals for Children exist in several countries such as Sierra Leone, Ethiopia, Ghana, Nigeria, South Sudan, Zambia, Madagascar, Mali and Benin. Children's hospitals exist in several countries like Sierra Leone, Ethiopia, Ghana, Nigeria, the Sudan, the Zambia, Madagascar, Mali, and Benin. On the other hand, there are also health centres and dispensaries most of which are not always functional due to lack of drugs poor, infrastructure and medical personnel.

Most of the countries which had children participating in the consultations have established a Special Police Unit and Children's Courts which address problems concerning children. Their actions are however not well known.

Concerning the adoption of the poverty reduction plan of action, it appears from the country reports that all the countries have taken a number of initiatives by developing and adopting programs and action plans such as:

- Poverty eradication plans of action and their translation into a simple language accessible to children;
- Free basic education ;
- School canteens ;
- Free immunization cares for children;
- Plans of actions to combat the worst forms of child labor;
- Plans of actions against the sexual exploitation of children ;
- Nutrition programs to provide food supplements (fortified food) to children;
- Birth registration programs ;
- Vitamin « A » distribution programs ;
- National child protection plans ;
- Plans of action in favour of orphans and other vulnerable children (OEV);

However, the participation of children in the development of these plans and programs was minimal in all the countries. In some cases, children stress their ignorance of how the documents were developed and in others; they affirm that they played a much more decorative or cosmetic than participative role in the process.

## **2.4 • Improving the quality of life: Healthcare for every child.**

### **2.4.1 • Caring for newborns and small children on the nutritional and health plan (including immunization).**

The answer to the question on the care for newborns and small children seems to be rather equivocal, as there are as many countries where children acknowledge that progress was made in this area as countries where participants in the consultations state the opposite.

The former, those who acknowledge that progress was made, point to, among others:

- The adoption of exclusive 6 month breastfeeding and safe motherhood programs.
- The existence of special pediatric care, of free nutritional supplements and of free immunization program (with vaccination days).
- The existence of sections for children in public health structures.
- The multiplication of Basic Health Center (CSB 1 and CSB2) and the reinforcements of the capacities of the health and paramedical personnel have been beneficial to mothers.
- Early childhood development programs.
- Free caesarean sections in some countries.
- The creation of hospitals for mothers and children, etc.
- The existence of special paediatric care, free nutritional supplements and a free immunization programme (with specific vaccination days)
- The existence of sections for children in public sanitary facilities

For those who profess that no progress was made, newborns and small children are not cared for due to a number of factors:

- Remote areas are not covered by immunization;
- The very high cost of food due to inflation;
- The basic needs of children such as housing, food, health, treatment and healthcare are not sufficiently covered due to the economic crises in the countries;
- Mismanagement and poor distribution of impregnated nets;
- The non existence of health centres everywhere and the poor quality of the services performed by unskilled health personnel, etc.

### **2.4.2 • Access by children to potable water and to health equipment in their communities and in their schools.**

Regarding access to potable water and to sanitation facilities, children noticed that there is a clear difference between children from urban areas (suburbs and peripheral quarters excluded) who have access to those services and children from rural areas where problems of access to potable water and sanitation facilities are still very acute.

### **2.4.3 • Introduction of hygiene education in school programs**

According to children hygiene education is part of the school program and requires higher level of specialization by the teachers of the discipline.

## **2.5 • Eradicating HIV/AIDS to ensure the rights of children to survival and development.**

The issues related to the effectiveness of HIV/AIDS control, the access of children and the youth to prevention services including drugs elicited more or less positive answers from the children who participated in the consultations.

They attribute this to the HIV/AIDS control programs adopted by the countries, the many sensitization campaigns, the mobilization of all the populations groups and free HIV tests and free anti retroviral drugs in some countries. To this end, children actively participate in some countries in actions to control the pandemic. They are more knowledgeable of the disease and of the prevention measures.

According to the participants, very often and in many countries, the sensitization does not reach people in the rural villages and in areas inhabited by the poor. Most of the activities (concerts) are organized in the capital and only benefit those who have the means. It is seen also that the messages are not often well conveyed in order to facilitate communication to everyone.

One notes a certain lack of sincere will to combat the sickness. Worse still, some people take advantage of this unfortunate situation of children who are born infected with AIDS.

To these actions, one must add the existence in some countries:

- of HIV/AIDS counselling centres created in youth and entertainment centres;
- of multimedia centres animated by the youth for the youth;
- the strong level of involvement by the media;
- the development of several specific educational documents on STI/HIV/AIDS in formal education.

Despite these efforts, children deplore a number of facts such as:

- the progression of the disease ;
- the very high number of infected and/or affected children;
- the non access of children from rural areas to drugs;
- the non distinction between adult and child patients.
- the isolation and stigmatization of children affected by HIV/AIDS in communities and schools;
- increased school drop outs.

## 2.6 • Right to Education

### 2.6.1 • Access to good quality education

**The great majority of children think that they have access to some education.**

They hasten however to enumerate the multitude of factors which affect the quality of education in the countries. They consist of among others:

- The cost of formal schooling
- Poverty and the limited means which parents use to give their children quality education
- Insufficient school infrastructure and the quality education personnel
- Disparities between rural schools and urban schools on the one hand and on the other hand between private and public schools.
- The lack of confidence in the public sector education as a result of strikes
- The emergence of teacher's syndicates

In summary, the quality of public school education has degraded much more than the private sector. There are too many school strikes and very little learning taking place or non at all. One sees more and more, a distinction between the education systems: the rich in the private schools where there is some quality of education and the poor in the public schools where education is sub standard. The majority of children stop after the primary school level ending up without a sound educational background.

### 2.6.2 • Enrolment and treatment of girls in school

In a unanimous way, the children recognize that there are positive measures in place that favour the schooling of girls in different countries. Girls benefit from the same treatment as boys in school. This explains the reasonable rise in school attendance at this level.

- Schooling for girls has progressed and while some have attained up to secondary school education, others have gone as far up as to university

For the children there are still some unfavourable practices that work against girl education

- The girls are always victims of discrimination
- Disparities exist between regions in one country
- Girls are not always treated in the same manner as their boy colleagues, because of cultural beliefs at family levels (it is said often, that their place is in the kitchen)
- Some girls are victims of unwanted pregnancies, of early marriages and sexual abuse

- Governments in partnership with several international organizations have developed strategies which favour the schooling of girls by introducing programmes which are well elaborated. While the programmes give results that appear convincing, they are not satisfactory.

### **2.6.3 • Schools for children living with disability**

Unfortunately, there are thousands of children who do not possess all their mental, physical and psychological abilities in Africa. Because of their health status, these children need special care and to be protected against discrimination and stigmatization.

Some of these children are blind, others are deaf and mute or have lost the use of their legs, hands or are mentally deficient, etc.

In the past, these cases were handled within the big family circle, nowadays; an increasing number of children in that situation are left alone to face their fate.

In the last few years, several countries have developed initiatives aimed at addressing these issues in order to enable children with disabilities enjoy all their rights like other children. Their schooling is a part of this momentum of the promotion and protection of their rights.

During the consultations, children made observations on the education of children living with disabilities.

- Schools for disabled children are few, often private and very expensive
- The schools are unequally distributed and mostly found in large towns.
- Children living with physical, motor, mental, social... handicaps do not attend special schools
- The schools' architecture is not adapted to their specific needs
- The schools are generally under NGOs and religious organizations with programmes for re-adaptation at community level
- Children living with disabilities are more and more accepted in normal schools

### **2.6.4 • Are health and the development of life skills part of the school program?**

According to children, health and the development of life skills are taught in schools. The programmes cover the following skills and subjects:

- Bread making and cake making classes
- Physical education and health education at both primary and secondary school level
- Hygiene education and environmental sciences
- Hygiene committees have been established in certain schools
- Many schools teach personal hygiene environmental and skills for life
- Physical educational programmes, health education, and domestic financial programmes are taught

However, the participants deplore the lack of commitment of teachers and pupils resulting on one hand from the fact that health and life skills are not exam topics and on the other, qualified personnel capable of taking charge of this section in an efficient manner is lacking in many schools.

### **2.6.5 • Do children have other training opportunities to self develop and to gain professional experiences?**

Professional trainings are offered in vocational schools. Professional training is compromised by funding problems on the one hand and on the other, to the insufficiency of structures. The creation of literacy centres under the « Education for All » program in some countries, saw poor children who have no access to formal school have an opportunity to learn subjects such as ICT, management techniques, etc. Unfortunately, these centres are still very rare and exist only in urban centres.

There is an increasing number of professional schools with a high variety of sections in both formal and informal education, public and private schools.

## 2.7 • Right to protection

### 2.7.1 • Protecting children against war

According to the participants, children are exposed to war almost everywhere in Africa, where there are many tension zones such as Liberia, Sierra Leone, Cote d'Ivoire, Chad, Sudan, RCA, DRC, Congo, Uganda, Burundi, Rwanda, Somalia, Ethiopia, etc. Even countries spared by war are forced to host refugees and displaced populations, many of whom are children. These children are welcome in unprotected camps. Often, the host country is not prepared to welcome them. Hence, children stay in the camps for years without education or training.

Some children affirm that « the authorities, the institutions whose responsibility is to protect us flee away when conflicts start. We and our families are left alone to face our fate.”

There are many cases of child soldiers who have been tortured, raped and amputated. These children are recruited by force in the regular army or in the rebellion in violation of the CRC and ACRWC. They participate directly in the war.

However, they pointed to experiences in which « after the war, former child soldiers benefited from reintegration measures and specialized agencies often take care of traumatized children victimized by war”.

Unfortunately, the measures do not last long enough to ensure successful reintegration of these children.

### 2.7.2 • Protecting against exploitation

Some children affirm that the exploitation of children is decreasing as a result of the sensitization campaigns carried out in the countries. Workshops to raise awareness, IEC are organized, and sensitization movies on the sexual exploitation of children for commercial purposes are produced and projected. The projection is followed by discussions and debates. Reports are produced on child labor (mine works, salt works, home works...). Some artists contribute to the fight against exploitation with songs.

One can notice higher level of respect between workers and employers in work places, as a result of the concrete dialogue and negotiation and the training conducted by child organizations on heavy works by children and their rights.

On the other hand, some children think that the exploitation is continuing because:

- Child labor, trafficking and prostitution are rampant.
- Children are economically and socially exploited especially in war situations;
- Children are exploited by their families for economic purposes (as beggars, home workers, fishers, herdsman);
- Many children are still suffering in silence;
- Parents compel children to work in areas such as mining, home labor, farm work to cover the needs of their families.

The causes of child labor are poverty, the incapacity to assume the role of parents properly, peers influence, divorce, broken marriages, and households run by orphans, etc.

The insufficiency of employment opportunities for parents is a key factor of the economic exploitation of children.

### 2.7.3 • Integrating elements of the rights and protection of the child into the school program

With the exception of three, no other country has taken steps to integrate elements of the rights of the child in school programs.

Integration is not systematic as of yet in the school programs of the three countries that took the initiative to teach child rights in school. Elements of child rights and protection are found sometimes in the civic education programs or in the training courses for teachers.

## 2.7.4 • Trafficking in children and rehabilitating child victims

Child trafficking is source for concern in the great majority of countries whose children participated in the consultations. For children, trafficking is both internal and international.

Nowadays, children are trafficked for several reasons:

- participate in war;
- Some children are taken to other countries to work as domestic workers;
- Some are victims of trade under the pretext of adoption.
- Promises of employment or scholarships abroad.
- Children are considered as sources of revenue and subjected to the worst forms of labor, to sexual abuses, home works or begging.
- Poverty and illiteracy of parents and high population growth increase the rate of vulnerable children.

In countries affected by the phenomenon, there are rehabilitation programs. Governments in these countries and NGOs have set up centers where child victims benefit from free treatment and from social reinsertion measures. However, there is need to strengthen these measures.

Laws and cooperation agreements against child trafficking exist, but they are poorly enforced.

The children deplored the fact that there hardly exist rehabilitation centres for victims of sexual exploitation.

## 2.8 • Right to participation

More than half of the children affirm that they participated in discussions or actions decided by government or the authorities seeking to improve the situation of children in their countries. Civil society and religious organizations organize debates to which children are invited to participate, most often in schools.

This consists, among others participation in seminars, workshops, conferences, parliamentary sessions, cultural activities such as the presentation of sketches for instance. The themes developed are diverse and range from education, to the rights of the child, to vaccination, birth registration, early and forced marriages, excision, child trade, etc.

Members of child Parliaments or other child organizations represent children in these debates.

Thanks to these debates and activities, the participation of children has become more effective and a good partnership is taking place between child organizations, the authorities and civil society organizations. More and more children are speaking out to take a stand on specific issues.

Girls participate actively like boys; there is no discrimination toward them.

Despite these significant progresses, it is the opinion of children that there is a lot of room for improvement in the partnership between them and adults.

All the children unanimously affirm that governments organize ceremonies to commemorate the day of the African Child (16 June) and in most cases, they are strongly involved in the organization of these ceremonies.

In some countries the activities of 16 June are presided over by the highest authorities and cover several areas such as the provision of presents to needy children, trips to some of the areas where children go, conferences.

With the exception of children from two countries, all the others affirm that youth organizations and child parliaments benefit from support by governments through training sessions, the provision of offices and equipments, etc.

**These various supports have allowed child organizations and parliaments to implement actions aimed at improving the life conditions of children. Among actions carried out we can cite:**

- Training for children in areas that can impact on their skills;
- Participation in immunization programs;
- Support for orphans and street children;
- fighting early marriages;
- Identification and enrolment of child workers;
- Lobbying and advocacy actions for the adoption of laws protecting children and participation in their implementation through sensitization;
- Organization of demonstrations sponsored to raise funds to support poor children in health institutions.
- providing counseling as peer educators;
- Search for aid funds to provide the youth with capital allowing them to undertake income generating activities;
- reporting on various cases of child abuse and neglect;
- children in institutions and shelters
- play with children living in different situations;
- Identification of school age children, giving school principals monitoring and enrolment files;
- supporting girls education;
- Training workshops for children and adults on the rights of the child;
- Restitution of training workshops to other children;
- Socio educational activities;
- lessons of life campaign and communication in favour of OVC (combating the stigmatization of OVCs)
- surveying the status of the rights of the child;
- sensitization on female genital mutilations (FGM) and early marriages;
- identification of 12 priority rights : education, health, training, listening, security, leisure, fighting exodus and child trade, protection, care for child victims, sensitization on the rights, dialogue in conflict situation, combating mines, sports, dancing, theatre, folklore, IGA and saving-credit for poverty reduction.
- creation of learning centers, birth registration, etc.

**Adults : listening to children**

Opinion is divided :

For some, parents are more and more listening to children than in the past through several actions:

- The production of special radio and TV programs for children has allowed them to speak out to a bigger adult audience.
- the organization of IEC campaigns, the creation of counselling and care centers, interventions in schools, the big demonstrations and the various training and capacity building workshops of associations and NGO and movements of parents and school authorities or religious leaders, and the movies shown on TV have brought about attitude and behavioural changes in parents.
- The higher number of interventions on child rights issues by various actors, in particular from the civil society.

They affirm that children are increasingly involved in the choice of their studies. Adults also take into account the opinion of their children, particularly in urban areas. The number of interventions by children during meetings is increasing and their opinion is increasingly taken into account in decision making.

For others, adults have the feeling that children do not have good ideas. Besides they (adults) have too many problems and not enough time to listen to children.

For them, « adults traditionally only impose and children do not have the right to speak especially during family meetings. Some families hold exchange and discussion sessions on issues of everyday life or on the news or events without asking the opinion of children. »

As a solution, they propose that parents be educated to be better attentive to their children.

## 2.9 • Combating poverty

For the majority of the children, poverty of children and their parents has not receded. The following conclusions have been drawn:

- The level of poverty in families continues to increase
- The high cost of living and unemployment have put parents in a situation of poverty. This situation of poverty which affects mainly the rural folk, manifests in different forms: material poverty, financial, intellectual and also political

For a few of the children, the economies of their countries have improved and free primary education has made education more accessible to children whose parents are unable to pay their school fees.

## 2.10 • Legal protection of children

### 2.10.1 • Adopting laws to protect children

Almost all the children confirm that their governments have passed laws to protect the children of their countries.

- The Adoption of the law concerning the protection of children
- A good number of children confirmed that governments adopted laws to protect children in their countries.
- As concerns the specific question of birth registration, it is mandatory in all the countries. State Civil Centres have been created, but unfortunately many children do not have birth certificates because of lack of information and the negligence or the poverty of their parents.
- Births are not systematically registered in the rural areas. In war torn countries many children do not have birth certificates, because of the none functioning of their government offices or the destruction of the registers.

Some countries adopted national birth registration programs and even facilitated acquisition procedures.

### 2.10.2 • Inheritance of property such as land by girls

Several children affirm that girls can inherit properties such as land, particularly in countries that have a family code that does not discriminate between girls and boys.

In some countries, inheritance is based on the customs and traditions of localities. In Islam for instance, the Koran acknowledges the right of girls to inherit, but their share is half that of boys.

### 2.10.3 • Existence of laws on the adoption of children, of friendly police units and tribunals for children.

All the countries have adoption laws, special police units and tribunals for children. But few children are familiar with these institutions and laws.



# III. Difficulties encountered by child organizations and movements

Despite the numerous efforts towards them, children organizations and movements are still confronted with a number of challenges in their bid to improve the conditions of children in their countries. These difficulties include:

- **Insufficient financial means:** it is cited as the principal problem
- **The children noted that there was a lack of sufficient funding mobilized** for children issues especially for the very vulnerable children and those living in urban areas.
- **Insufficient support for children's organizations:** Despite the talk, the initiatives taken by children still remain very poorly supported, notably by governments. This gives the children the impression that they are not being taken seriously and that generally the promises made are not upheld by government
- **Socio-cultural issues:** they constitute a resistance to the behavioural change required in the various communities for better protection of children against exploitation, violence and for the denunciation of these acts.
- **Insufficient political instruments to protect the child:** Several institutional and legal instruments exist at the level of countries (departments, laws, conventions, programmes etc...) these instruments are hardly harmonized and rarely applied and not popularized
- **The poor coordination of actions in favour of the child:** There are several interventions (State, Children's Organizations, Civil Society, NGOs and the private sector) which communicate very little or not at all with one another. This lack of co-ordination between the various parties does not facilitate the accompaniment of children and the promotion of their rights.
- **Weak intervention in the rural areas:** the principal actions are addressed particularly to children in the urban setting and yet it is in the rural areas where there are child labourers and where children are victims of trafficking and other forms of exploitation. However, in the urban setting vulnerable children are forgotten except for meetings.
- **Weak information on the actors:** there is not enough information on the different categories of children and their needs. The information available is not in the national language in the countries where illiteracy is highly prevalent. Legal documents and other conventions are therefore in language that is not understood by the majority of the national population. The information is therefore not well disseminated.
- **Insufficient infrastructure that governs children's needs Infrastructure** that governs children's needs exist principally in urban areas: schools for the handicapped, training centres, health centres, leisure centres. The demand for infrastructure is still very strong in the rural areas and efforts do not yet seem to be targeting the rural areas. The high cost of formal schooling appears to be a great difficulty for children.
- **Lack of pressure from the international community** on countries that do not uphold the importance of protecting children's rights: for children, the international community does not exert enough pressure on governments to protect children. Some think that developed countries are selfish and give unserviceable loans to governments that already lack the means to service them. These countries are considered poor by the children.

- **The presence of armed conflicts:** Armed conflicts constitute great difficulties for children some of whom are enrolled and others who are displaced. This situation disrupts their schooling and threatens their survival.
- **The spread of HIV/AIDS:** the persistence of HIV/AIDS in the countries threatens children who are victims on two accounts. They may lose the support of their parents (who lose all their resources, die from AIDS), and when they are affected or infected, they are victims of stigmatization.
- **The poor participation of the private sector** in the promotion of the rights of the child: For the children private sector is not interested in the protection of the child. The economic exploitation of children and the lack of infrastructures could be at the heart of the negotiation between the State and the private sector.



# Recommendations

After the identification of difficulties, children formulated recommendations for themselves but also for adults, Governments, the private sector, and the international community.

## **Recommendations for children and their organizations:**

- Stick together;
- Be respectful;
- Put our intelligence to work for us ;
- Know and defend our rights ;
- Intensify sensitization campaigns for the promotion of the rights of the child and HIV/AIDS control;
- Participate in international forums.

## **Recommendations for adults and their organizations:**

- Know and get people to know the rights of the child ;
- Collect and take into account the opinions of children (namely in family meetings);
- Accept collaboration with child organizations ;
- Respect the interests of children ;
- Put girls and boys on the same footing ;
- Love children ;
- Fulfil promises made to children ;
- Protect children against all forms of violence.

## **Recommendations for Governments:**

- Protect children through laws and policies against all forms of discrimination, violence and calamities;
- Create infrastructures to care for children, including handicapped children (schools, health, training and entertainment centers, etc.);
- Fully enforce the laws protecting the rights of the child;
- Make infrastructures accessible to all children in all areas;
- Make primary school free for all children, girls and boys including handicapped children;
- End hostilities in conflict zones for better protection of the rights of children;
- Make sure children victims of armed conflicts, of any form of torture, exploitation and enrolment in armed forces receive appropriate treatment to ensure their re-adaptation and reinsertion;
- Increase funding for Children's programmes
- Manage the resources of the countries properly in peace and tolerance between all;
- Fulfil their commitments ;
- Support the initiatives of children ;
- Intensify sensitization campaigns against all forms of discrimination, violence and against HIV/AIDS;
- Eradicate the street children phenomenon.

## **Recommendations for the private sector:**

- Take steps to protect against the economic exploitation of children in companies;
- Avoid environmental pollution ;
- Take the wishes of children to the administrative and religious authorities;
- Support the States, child organizations, associations and organizations working for children;
- Create everywhere entertainment centers for children;
- Invest against child and parental poverty ;
- Respect the international norms set for children ;
- Build houses and drill boreholes for potable water.

### **Recommendations for the African Union (AU):**

- Support child rights organizations for the annual commemoration of the Day of the African Child with long term programs for children;
- Collect funds from member States and other sources to support the health, education, and protection of children;
- Sanction member States that fail to protect children by taking away their voting right in the Union;
- Ban member States that are not in compliance with the common African position on children from participation in the AU Conference;
- Set up a task force to monitor and report cases of child rights violation and of child trade in an effective manner;
- Create a Child Rights National Observatory in each Member State of the AU.
- Require each Member State to ratify CADBEE.

### **Recommendations for the international community:**

- Put pressure on States in order for them to respect and enforce the rights of the child;
- Provide the supervision structures with financial and material resources to combat poverty;
- Draft tough laws condemning all forms of violence against children;
- Help countries with appropriate means allowing to promote the rights of the child;
- Create equality between all the children of the world (good education, good health, employment for our parents).

# ANNEXE

## National consultations of child organizations and movements on the midway review of the common African position on children « An Africa fit for children »

### Presentation of the questionnaire

#### Question N°1

How many children know the African Charter on the Right and Welfare of the Child and the Common African Position on children « An Africa fit for children » ?

#### Question N°2

In your country, did the Government implement one or more of the following actions? If yes, which ones? (Specify dates where possible).

- Creation of a Ministry in Charge of Children,
- Creation of an Office of Children at the Ministry of Health and Gender,
- Set up of a National Council for Children,
- Appointment of an Ombudsperson for the Office of Children,
- Creation of a Parliament for Children,
- Creation of hospitals for children,
- Constitution of Special Police Units in charge of Child related issues,
- Set up of Special Courts for Children, etc.

#### Question N°3

Did the Government or other authorities adopt a plan of action in favour of children against child poverty? If yes, describe briefly how this action plan has been developed, and explain the participation of children in the process.

#### Question N°4

a) Are newborns and small children better cared for on the nutritional and health plans (including immunization)?

If yes:

- What was done?
- What are the difficulties?
- Formulate 2 to 3 recommendations to lift the difficulties in that area.

b) Do children have access to potable water and health equipments in their communities and schools?

c) Is hygiene part of the school program?

#### Question N°5

Is HIV/AIDS control becoming more effective? Do children and the youth have access to prevention services and, in the case of those who are infected, access to care including drugs?

- What did your country do in this area?
- Are HIV/AIDS prevention and care programs accessible to the youth in your country?
- What are the difficulties?
- Are children infected by HIV/AIDS kept away from the others in your community and school?
- Formulate 2 to 3 recommendations for better protection of children against HIV/AIDS in your country.

#### Question N°6

- Do all children have access to quality education? How?
- Are girls enrolled in high numbers in school? Are they treated the same way boys are treated?
- Are there schools for handicapped children in your country?
- Are health education and the development of life skills taught in school?

- Do children have other training opportunities to self develop and to acquire professional experience?
- What difficulties hinder access to quality education by all children?
- What can be done to remove these difficulties?

#### **Question N°7**

- What has your country done to better protect children against war?
- Are former child soldiers integrated in society and are they treated the same way as the other children?
- What are the difficulties in this area?
- What must be done to find solution to these difficulties?

#### **Question N°8**

- are the Right and Protection of the child part of education programs?
- Are there many child workers in your country? If yes, were they sent by their families? Or for other reasons?
- Are children victim of trade in your country and from your country to other countries? If yes, why and how?
- Are children victim of violence, abuse, sexual exploitation etc. protected by the government of your country? Do you have re-adaptation programs in your country?

#### **Question N°9**

- Is child registration compulsory in your country?
- Do all children have birth certificate?
- Do girls have the right to inherit property such as land, etc.?
- Are there laws on child adoption?
- What are the difficulties related to child registration?
- What must be done to register all children at birth in your country?

#### **Question N°10**

Did you participate in discussions or actions decided by your Government or authorities or by adult organizations on the situation of children?

- If yes, what was the occasion? Explain your participation.
- Are girls allowed to participate in the discussion?
- Is the government of your country organizing programs to commemorate the Day of the African Child? If yes, are children involved and do they participate in the programs?
- Does the government support organizations working in favour of children and the parliament of children in your country?
- What must be done for better participation by children?

#### **Question N°11**

Did you initiate and implement through your organizations and movements, actions to improve the living conditions of children in your country?

- If yes, which ones? (Give as many details as possible).
- What are the main difficulties encountered by your organizations in their attempts to improve the life of children in your country?
- What solution do you propose?
- If no, why ?

#### **Question 12**

To improve further the life of children and the youth in your country, in a general manner,

- What must children and their organizations do?
- What must adults and their organizations do?
- What must the Government and the authorities of your country do?
- What must the private sector do?
- What must the international community do?

*NB: formulate 3 to 5 recommendations per question*



