

STATE PARTY EXAMINATION OF RWANDA'S THIRD AND FOURTH PERIODIC REPORTS

63RD SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

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Rwanda ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) on 24 January 1991. On 30 and 31 May 2013, the Committee on the Rights of the Child (the Committee) examined the third and fourth periodic reports of Rwanda. It was last examined on 21 May 2004.

Opening Comments

The delegation of Rwanda was led by Ms Zaina Nyiramata, Executive Secretary of the National Commission for Children in Rwanda. She was supported by a small delegation of representatives from the Ministry of Justice and the Chargé d'Affaires at the Permanent Mission of Rwanda to the United Nations in Geneva. Ms Nyiramata offered her apologies for the delay in the submission of the report of the CRC and for the late transmission of the written replies to the Optional protocols.

Ms Nyiramata outlined that the State party had faced tremendous challenges as a result of the genocide in 1994 which had resulted in the death of over one million citizens and had left minimal institutional framework and sparse human resources for the State party to rely on. The State had since set up institutions and policies to rebuild itself and restore its social and economic fabric. An institutional taskforce had been created as an advisory body for the preparation of treaty reports and the signing and ratification of treaties, which had aided in drastically reducing the backlog of pending reports.

The State had made significant progress in achieving a higher standard of living for its people. In 2011, it had adopted an integrated child rights policy and corresponding strategic plan and had formulated guidance documents for institutions for the implementation of the CRC and its two Optional Protocols. The policy had been structured on seven key areas: identity and nationality; family and alternative child care; survival, health and standard of living; education; protection; justice; and child participation. In March 2012, a child protection programme was created to allow for specific interventions.

Ms Nyiramatama reiterated that despite the many challenges stemming from the horrific genocide, the State party remained firmly committed to rights of the child and looked forward to continued collaboration between civil society and the government.

Ms Aidoo and Ms Aldoseri, the Country Rapporteurs, commended the State on its post-conflict development since the genocide and highlighted that the State had become one of the most vibrant economies in the African region. The Rapporteurs noted that Rwanda was on track to successfully achieve most of the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. It was also noted that the State had the highest proportion of women involved in parliament in the world.

The Rapporteurs noted that the government had developed comprehensive policies regarding children with a disability, child labour and gender issues; and the Committee highlighted that the creation of the National Commission for Children in 2011 was a notable achievement. Ms Aidoo expressed concern about outstanding challenges which included geographical disparities, gender discrimination and violence against girls, as well as high levels of poverty which affected 44.9 per cent of the population, of which up to 60 per cent were children.

General Measures of Implementation

Civil society involvement

The Committee commended the State for its high level of coordination and cooperation with United Nations agencies but asked about the level of coordination with civil society in addressing children's rights in the State. It was particularly concerned about the threats and arrests human rights defenders faced and asked the delegation to elaborate on this issue.

The delegation stated that civil society organisations remained very active within the State party and expressed surprise that there had been reports of intimidation against human rights defenders. The delegation highlighted that freedom of expression was encouraged and guaranteed for human rights defenders within the State. Furthermore, the National Commission for Children were affiliated with a list of NGOs that brought together government institutions to address the seven different fields related to children. The delegation recognised the value, knowledge and capacity of NGOs in assisting on matters relating to children and they were therefore consulted from the outset.

Coordination and monitoring

The Committee sought clarification about whether the National Commission for Children was the body that was responsible for coordinating legislation, policies and programmes for children at national and district levels and whether it was fully compliant with the Paris Principles. The delegation was also asked how children were informed about the option to participate and make complaints to such bodies.

Furthermore, the Committee asked the delegation to explain the mandate of the Observatory for Child Rights and whether it was accessible to children. Particularly, the Committee noted that both the National Commission for Children and the Observatory for Child Rights appeared to be collecting data on children and asked how the two bodies cooperated with one another.

The delegation explained that the Observatory for Child Rights had been created within the National Commission of Human Rights. Its role was to conduct research on areas relating to children's rights and to ensure that information on children was accessible for reports to the government.

The Committee expressed concern that the rural areas faced significantly higher levels of poverty and other disparities and asked whether there were any mapping projects in place. It also asked what mechanisms were being used to coordinate different sectors and ensure that multi-sector organisations worked collectively to prioritise interventions for children.

The delegation confirmed that the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion was responsible for making national policies and programmes regarding children and the family. The delegation stated that there was an Advisory Council to the National Commission for Children, which included permanent secretaries of the relevant ministries and representatives from the Commissions on Reconciliation and the Commission to Combat Genocide.

The National Commission for Children (NCC) was supervised by the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion and was responsible for coordinating the implementation of policies regarding children and the family. The NCC was composed of 19 permanent staff and had ad-hoc staff for specific projects. Furthermore, community-based child care workers had been made available to support families and ensure that situations of vulnerability for children were prevented.

Training

The Committee asked whether fully trained child rights officers existed throughout the State party including at decentralised levels.

Allocation of resources

The Committee commended the State party's efforts to immunise children but expressed concern that with the exception of education, resources remained low at 1.3 million US dollars compared to the 13 million US dollars in funding from external partners. The Committee asked what measures had been taken regarding the budget to increase the funding for all areas of the CRC and whether a child rights perspective was considered when deciding budgetary lines such as for children with disabilities and children belonging to minority groups.

Data collection

The Committee expressed concern about the missing data on children particularly regarding child-headed households, children with a disability and children living in poverty. It asked whether there was a body responsible for collecting such data in these areas and sought clarification as to whether data was collected and coordinated by a range of institutions.

The delegation stated that there was a monitoring system to gather information about children living in particularly vulnerable situations such as children in street situations. Responses for children were developed on a case-by-case basis and information was noted regarding their personal details and characteristics as well as where they went upon leaving an alternative care placement. Furthermore software packages, which utilised specific criteria, or indicators, for the identification of vulnerable children were used in the National Commission for Children.

With regards to monitoring disparities within families, the delegation stated that a household census was conducted every five years. Additionally, the State party planned to establish separate mechanisms at village level to monitor and collect data on families more frequently.

Definition of the Child

The Committee expressed concern about reports that children under the age of 10 had been deprived of their liberty and asked the delegation to comment on the minimum age of criminal responsibility.

The delegation clarified that the minimum age of criminal responsibility was 14 and that no child under the age of 14 had been placed in prison.

General Principles

Non-discrimination

The Committee commended the State for its legal initiatives promoting non-discrimination such as Law No. 54/2011 on the equality of education, as well as the State's ratification of Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination which reflected a strong commitment by the State. Nevertheless, reports suggested that serious discrimination existed in the State and was particularly directed at children born out of rape, children with a disability, particularly girls, and children from the Batwa minority group. The Committee asked the delegation to elaborate on the campaign that had been created to aid Batwa families and how safe drinking water had been ensured in the villages where they were to be settled.

The Committee asked how anti-discrimination issues were being monitored and whether there were specific policies to end stigmatisation of certain groups of children. It asked whether any complaints mechanism existed to report incidents of discrimination and if any individual had been brought to justice for discrimination and held accountable. The Committee also asked if children were able to report cases of discrimination and inquired whether positive discrimination existed to promote increased opportunities for the most vulnerable children in society.

The Committee asked how the State party protected children against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender and how diversity programmes and policies were handled to preserve identity. It also inquired whether there were any criminalising measures against persons expressing homophobic views.

The delegation stated that no individual was considered as belonging to an ethnic group as all individuals were identified as Rwandans. Furthermore, the delegation highlighted that any form of discrimination was punishable by law. Policies, laws and programmes had been created to guarantee equity for all and citizens at village level were consulted regarding assistance in the areas of health and education. In particular, it was stipulated in legislation that all children were born equal and were entitled to equal enjoyment of all rights and freedoms without discrimination. The delegation had no evidence to suggest that discrimination was an issue within the State.

Under the rule of law, any individual was able to file a complaint where discrimination had occurred and where the complainant was a minor, the child would be represented by a parent or a legal guardian.

Right to Life, Survival and development

The Committee asked the delegation what steps had been taken to ensure equitability in terms of realising children's rights to life, survival and development.

Respect for the views of the child

The Committee asked about the extent of child participation in matters affecting them. The Committee also requested further information about the summits that were held and the extent of authority they had in the decision-making process. Furthermore, it asked about the topics included in these summits and how their outcomes were taken into account in decision-making processes. Finally, the Committee asked about the school-based suggestion boxes which were available to children and whether there were any other steps being used to promote child protection. It also asked about whether there was an on-going forum to

encourage participation in schools and high schools. The Committee asked the extent to which their suggestions were applied.

The delegation stated that children could participate in annual national children's summits. The summits targeted different groups of children, including particularly vulnerable groups of children. Children met at the local level to discuss themes and elected their peers to represent them at the national level summit. The delegation stated that the upcoming summit would be held in October and November 2013 during school holidays to encourage participation.

Civil Rights and Freedoms

Birth Registration

The Committee commended the State's efforts to improve birth registration rates; however although 82 per cent of children under five years had reportedly been registered, other data suggested that only 62 per cent of children had been registered, of which only 7 per cent possessed a birth certificate. The Committee asked if any research had been carried out in this area and about the steps that could be taken to remedy the situation. Furthermore, the Committee expressed concern that penalties for late registration of new-borns were a deterrent for some parents, which included either a fine or even one to seven days imprisonment.

The Committee asked for clarification regarding the difference between children being registered with civil authorities and children registered in health centres who received birth certificates and whether this adversely affected their enjoyment of their rights. Additionally, the Committee noted that in recent years, birth registration had become a decentralised process and that the last Saturday of every month had been the designated day for outreach to families to raise awareness about the importance of birth registration. The Committee asked whether there were any plans to use mobile units for registration and to remove penalties imposed on parents for failure to register children.

The delegation recognised that there was insufficient awareness raising regarding birth registration in the State and noted that it was currently reviewing and amending the laws and regulations in 23 states to ensure that these texts were favourable towards children. To increase awareness amongst parents, hospitals and local authorities, the State planned to use an ICT and hold open days for birth registration. Furthermore, the State had placed terms into performance contracts to ensure that medical practitioners complied with the requirement to register all new-born children.

The delegation stated that it planned to remove obstacles to registration through consultation, lobbying and use of instruments and policies to ensure that no obstacles prevented the State party from improving. Penalties would be examined with the view of improving the situation.

Paternity

The Committee commended the State's efforts to eradicate stigmatisation of children born out of wedlock and noted that referring to such children as 'illegitimate' or 'unnatural' was not in the best interests of the child. The Committee asked whether it was possible to establish paternity for children born out of wedlock and who could initiate such proceedings. It also asked about what happened where a father could not be identified and how this was reflected on the birth certificate.

The delegation stated that there were two potential solutions regarding the issue of paternity. Firstly, where a child is born to a mother who is herself a minor the government offers to young mothers free DNA tests to identify the father. Where the mother is an adult and is unable to afford DNA testing, the mother may register the child with an unknown father.

Corporal Punishment

The Committee expressed concern that corporal punishment had not been explicitly prohibited by law and asked the delegation if the State party had any plans to ban all forms of corporal punishment in all settings. It also asked whether the State planned to tackle the cultural traditional aspects of corporal punishment entrenched in society through awareness raising campaigns and trainings targeted at parents.

The delegation recognised that awareness-raising was essential in eradicating corporal punishment. In 2010, a national conference had been held regarding corporal punishment which children had been able to participate in and the recommendations were currently in the process of being implemented. In order to assess the effectiveness of the recommendations, it was necessary to wait until the Ministerial Order it had developed had been carried out.

The delegation stated that the law stipulated that punishment considered to be ill-treatment of children was not permissible. There was a ministerial order which was being developed in a way that would specify both mental and physical forms of corporal punishment. Furthermore, the State planned to hold consultations with stakeholders to ensure that the best interests of the child were prioritised.

Freedom of thought, conscience and religion

The Committee asked about the extent to which freedom of religion was guaranteed for all religious sectors and minorities.

Preservation of identity and right to privacy

The Committee asked about the extent that confidentiality was considered when handling children's records so that the information was not used inappropriately.

The delegation stated that the National Commission for Children had been recruiting psychologists and social workers to work with institutions and focus on families and the abandonment of children. Two additional staff members had been allocated to each group and it was hoped that this would expand in the future. Furthermore, where confidentiality was breached, it was punishable under the criminal code. Exceptions were applied when the breach was necessary for the best interests of the child.

Freedom of expression

The Committee asked about the extent to which individuals were able to express views freely through the press and the media.

The delegation confirmed that freedom of expression existed in all sectors of society, including the media.

Family Environment and Alternative Care

Children with Parental Care

The Committee asked whether there had been any mapping projects to look into that particular situation of children without parental care and whether any measure had been taken to ensure that children were placed with extended family where this was in the best interest of the child. The Committee further inquired about the availability of appropriate alternative housing with sanitary conditions while determining where to place children without parental care. Furthermore, the delegation was asked about the mechanisms that existed to ensure good practice throughout the transition of the child from institution to family-based care.

The Committee asked about the body that was responsible for monitoring child-headed households and which bodies were responsible for systematically following up with them.

The Committee also inquired about initiatives to help child-headed households and whether children's views were taken into account in such initiatives. The Committee asked the delegation to elaborate on the measures that had been taken to address child poverty and child-headed households.

The delegation highlighted that more than 70 per cent of the 3,000 children currently residing in institutions did have at least one living parent and that the majority of these children had been reunited with their families. The delegation hoped to move all children out of institutions by 2014 and services would be enhanced to support families at a community level. Furthermore, the State recognised the detrimental impact that institutionalisation could have on a child and had ensured that professional social workers supported children leaving such institutions.

Adoption

The Committee inquired about inter-country and domestic adoption, and about the measures that had been taken to ensure for effective implementation. The Committee also noted the State's adoption of the Hague Conventions on inter-country adoption in March 2012 and asked how national laws had hence been harmonised with this Convention. The Committee further inquired about the level of transparency and asked about how cases regarding the welfare of children were monitored to prevent children being removed from parental care and ensure follow-up in cases of adoption. The Committee also asked about the safeguards in place to ensure that children were not adopted for exploitative purposes.

The delegation explained that the State had accelerated its child care reform initiatives by reviewing its existing guidelines for families. The child care reform had not been limited to children in alternative care settings but had also addressed children with a disability as well. Special guidelines and centres had also been created for children with severe disabilities to ensure that such children were not isolated from the community.

Basic Health and Welfare

Standard of health

The Committee commended the State for its efforts to increase access to immunisation for children under the age of five. It noted however that malnutrition remained prevalent and asked what steps had been taken to address this issue.

The delegation highlighted that free medical insurance had been made available to all and that there were hospitals in each district to enhance accessibility to quality health services. Additionally, there were community-based health workers to treat basic illnesses. With regards to malnutrition, the delegation stated that as of 2009, a screening process had been established for children to identify and address such cases.

Breastfeeding

The Committee also asked about whether infant formula and breast milk substitutes were available in maternity clinics and how the marketing of these products was being monitored.

The delegation stated that it had been educating parents and training pregnant mothers in prenatal and postnatal care. The delegation confirmed that the State had been encouraging mothers to use exclusive breast milk for the first six months and following this food was introduced.

Gender based violence

The Committee noted that the State had made efforts to combat gender-based violence, particularly through one-stop centres in the eastern and western provinces and asked whether

it had any plans to extend the scope of such efforts throughout the country. It also asked about whether the system for reporting gender-based violence actually worked in practice and whether it had encouraged people to report. The delegation was also asked whether any measures were taken to investigate the validity of allegations of gender based violations and how ill-intentioned claims were dealt with.

One-stop centres had been created in a total of 13 districts which it planned to extend to the outstanding districts without such facilities. The delegation highlighted that there were plans to conduct a study on violence which it hoped would form the foundation for future programmes and measures. Additionally, the delegation stated that there had been a collaborative initiative between 52 organisations to address violence against women.

The delegation explained that the State had a gender-based violence law which stipulated that each person was under a duty to denounce any violation against a child and that any person that failed to do so could be punished by law. The delegation confirmed that the system of reporting worked extremely well as there were a range of different channels which worked together, which included the 112 helpline which provided assistance in all the districts. The “Eye of the Neighbour” programme, the Gender-Based Violence Committee, the Observatory for Child Rights, as well as radio programmes, all addressed the issue of gender-based violence.

Furthermore, five minutes of radio airtime was allocated per day to receiving and airing complaints about violations in different villages. When child-related complaints were received they were followed up by an individual at district level who would take over in collaboration with the Ministry of Justice. Where complaints were ill-intentioned they were investigated and subsequently punished for misuse of the system.

Adolescent health services

The Committee inquired about whether free and confidential adolescent health services existed throughout the State and whether girls received confidential counselling when accessing health services. The Committee also asked whether safe abortion was easily accessible for girls.

The delegation stated that legislation on safe abortion was currently under discussion and would be determined at a later date. Youth-friendly centres existed, which provided information on reproductive health, which was taught as part of the school curriculum.

Helpline

The Committee asked the delegation whether any helpline existed for children and adolescents and requested further information regarding the structure, capacity and functioning of it.

The delegation stated that there were two main helplines for denouncing cases of violence: 112 and 3435 which were easy to use and were widely publicised amongst both children and adults.

Harmful practices

The Committee welcomed the fact that the marriage age had been set at 21 and noted that the prevalence of harmful practices had reportedly been reduced by 15 per cent. The Committee asked what legal policies had been adopted in respect of harmful practices such as tonsillectomy and infant organ mutilation. It also asked whether any campaigns had been launched at community level to improve understanding of the risks and damages associated with such practices.

The delegation highlighted that harmful practices against children were prohibited by law and violations carried sanctions; however it did not possess any specific information of how such cases had been handled to date. The delegation clarified that there were no awareness-raising campaigns to educate communities; however it highlighted that there had been a decrease in such practices due to various other programmes.

Education, Leisure and Cultural Activities

Education

The Committee commended the State on the significant progress it had made in education since 1994. The Committee noted that following the genocide, a large number of primary schools opened and access to education improved; however the quality of education remained a concern.

The Committee noted that the State had implemented a nine-year policy in 2010 which had so far resulted in an increase in attendance rates from 52.4 per cent in 2007 to 79 per cent in 2011. The Committee expressed concern that the funding capacity for education remained low, with only 20 per cent of the national budget being allocated for all levels of education, which could lead to overcrowding in schools, insufficient training for teachers and a shortage of materials. The Committee also inquired about whether human rights education had been incorporated into the school curriculum.

The delegation highlighted that the Ministry of Education and the local governments had been encouraging the creation of additional classrooms to tackle the issue of overcrowding. In 2010 and 2011 around 3,000 classrooms had been created for 1,371 children between 2009 and 2010. In addition, varied school timetable programmes had been established to encourage children to attend school at different times. The programme had also been targeted at parents to encourage them to participate in their child's education. With regards to the quality of education, the delegation explained that the State was in the process of improving the quality of education through improved teacher training and materials.

Gender equality in education

The Committee commended the State for its efforts to achieve gender parity however highlighted that fewer girls were continuing on to secondary education, compared to boys. Despite this, the number of boys enrolled in secondary education had decreased overall. The Committee observed a decrease in male school attendance rates from 52 per cent to 48.5 per cent in 2011 and urged the delegation to conduct a study to examine the root causes of this trend. It requested further information on whether girls had equal access to education and how they were encouraged to stay in secondary school.

The delegation stated that girls had equal opportunities to access education and that girl-friendly facilities had been created in schools. In addition, the State had made significant efforts to encourage girls to participate in scientific programmes by offering financial packages for girls to cover the extra costs of education. With respect to teenage girls, there had been community sensitisation efforts to encourage them to stay in education. Furthermore, throughout secondary school a system of rewarding had been implemented to encourage girls to stay in school. The system had been headed by the First Lady of Rwanda in collaboration with UNICEF and allowed two children per district to benefit every year from various rewards such as scholarships, laptops and books.

The delegation acknowledged the increase in male drop-outs and theorised that a potential reason for this related to the geographical location of the schools. It stated it was hoping to introduce lunch systems to encourage male boys to attend school. Furthermore, families

experiencing financial difficulties were provided with state aid to encourage children to pursue education.

Vocational and informal training

The Committee asked if vocational training was available, particularly for children with a disability and those without parental care. The Committee also asked if any ‘catch-up’ programmes or informal training existed for children dropping out of school or for children who had not consistently attended school.

The delegation confirmed that informal and catch-up programmes existed within the State for children that had not consistently attended school. In addition, vocational training and technical education was available at both secondary school and university levels.

Early childhood development

The Committee commended the State for its early childhood development programme and sought further details regarding the extent of its implementation. It also asked about the level of multi-sector involvement and how efforts were coordinated for children from birth to six years. The Committee asked about whether there were any challenges in providing early childhood education, such as access for children in vulnerable situations, and asked about the level of funding for this area.

The delegation stated that early childhood development remained a key priority in the State and policies were regulated by the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Social Affairs in coordination with each local district. Throughout the formulation of the early childhood development policy, parents had been requested to participate in its construction as it was a community-based initiative. The delegation further added that many early childhood development programmes functioned in public and private settings. The early childhood development programme included an emphasis on prenatal care, the process of pregnancy and childbirth.

Children with a disability

The Committee inquired about whether there were any awareness-raising campaigns in place to eliminate stigmatisation against children with a disability. It also asked about whether children with a disability were able to pursue education in mainstream schools and the extent to which education was inclusive.

The delegation stated that the 2010 census reflected that there were 35,006 male children and 26,000 female children with disabilities attending school. Additionally, the government had established a National Council for Persons with Disabilities which aimed to identify the full range of disabilities in Rwanda and efforts had been carried out throughout the country to sensitise parents regarding care for children with a disability. The Ministry of Education planned to increase materials and information available for parents who were keeping children with a disability out of school.

The delegation further clarified that education was inclusive but that ultimately this depended on the level of disability. Where children were unable to attend mainstream schools due to a severe disability could be placed in specialised schools and the State would provide transport for such cases.

Leisure

The Committee commended the State for its efforts to promote and protect children’s right to leisure and recreational activities. It highlighted that in the State party there were historically marginalised groups and asked what was written in the Constitution regarding these rights. The delegation was also asked what had been done to raise awareness about children working

in fields instead of participating in recreational activities. The Committee also inquired about whether children had the time to play after school and whether it was common for children to be involved in domestic work and harvesting.

The delegation stated that children had the right to play after school and that additional playgrounds had been created to facilitate this. Child involvement in harvesting and domestic work was not prevalent in the State. Furthermore, the educational system was structured so that children were given two one-hour breaks throughout the day for recreational activities. The delegation highlighted that although child involvement in domestic work ultimately rested with the parents, children were generally preoccupied with doing homework and play after school. Furthermore, a range of recreational sports clubs and government programmes existed in the State to further encourage the child's right to leisure.

The Committee inquired about whether girls were able to participate in sports. The delegation stated that no distinctions were made in the State on the basis of gender and that girls enjoyed the same rights as boys in terms of participating in sports. Furthermore, there was a gender policy for education which aimed to raise awareness amongst parents to eliminate concepts of gender stereotypes in this respect.

Special Protection Measures

Child labour

The Committee commended the State on its ratification of ILO Convention 138 regarding the minimum age of work for children, and ILO Convention 182 regarding the worst forms of child labour. The Committee stated that although laws had been enacted to deal with this issue, reports suggested that there had been a 27 per cent increase in child labour in 2010, with approximately 60,000 children being reportedly involved in hazardous work. The Committee noted that the State had created a five year action plan running from 2007-2012 and asked the delegation to elaborate on the outcome of the action plan. The Committee also sought clarification about Law No. 54/2011 in terms of whether it allowed children under the age of 17 to work in mines, which was of concern as it constituted hazardous work. The Committee also highlighted that in 2008 a reported 65,000 children had been involved in hazardous work and inquired about whether the State had managed to reduce this number to zero in five years.

The delegation clarified that since 2008, that there had been significant efforts to address child labour including a case study on child labour by the Ministry of Labour regarding the work that was done in the fields. Additionally, a new law had been introduced regarding child labour and labour inspectors had been given new responsibilities to monitor its implementation. Specifically, Law No. 54/2011 stated that children could work from the age of 16 in certain conditions but had different working hours to adults and could work closely to parents. Work in mines had been banned by this law and was punished in both formal and informal sectors.

Awareness-raising campaigns had been conducted to address the eradication of child labour, particularly targeting employers and private entities. The delegation highlighted that legislation on child labour was very strictly punished by law and that the law stipulated that child labour which were prohibited. The delegation recognised that violations could potentially exist in family-run businesses. The State had provided economic assistance to parents and families as a means to eradicate child involvement in employment. Furthermore, programmes had been established to address hunger and poverty. Mines and plantations were also inspected regularly and there had been no evidence of children in mines or on plantations.

Juvenile justice

The Committee inquired about whether there were any specially trained judges for cases involving minors at lower level courts, as well as in the courts of first instance. The Committee asked the delegation if adult sentences were adjusted according to the age of the child and whether rehabilitative services existed for young offenders. Furthermore, the delegation was asked whether a child as young as 10 could be detained for offences carrying a five year imprisonment sentence. The Committee asked about the guarantees for children that were victims of offences and whether they had access to a lawyer as well as if special judges were used for cases involving minors.

The delegation stated that where an offence had been committed, the public prosecutor and the police would intervene on behalf of the child and that all children were required to be have a legal advisor. The criminal legislation made it explicitly clear that children could not be called in by the police or the courts unless they were accompanied by a legal representative. In civil cases, pro-bono assistance was made available for minors and the Ministry of Justice had been developing a similar policy for juvenile justice assistance.

Refugee children

The Committee asked how the process of family reunification worked when unaccompanied refugee children were recovered on the territory of Rwanda. The Committee also enquired about the necessary permits that relatives being reunited with child refugees in Rwanda required, and it applied to a child's extended family, for example in a case where the child had no living immediate family.

The delegation explained that the State was in the process of amending its legislation regarding refugee children. With regards to birth registration, the delegation noted that an administrative process existed in refugee camps to enable children born there to have access to birth registration.

Concluding Remarks

Ms Aidoo thanked the delegation for the constructive dialogue with the Committee. She highlighted that the State Party had made remarkable achievements and had created a new vision based on human rights which had been evident in the State Party's ratification of all the core human rights instruments.

Ms Aidoo stated that children continued to be deprived of some rights and that greater emphasis needed to be placed on the most marginalised groups such as children in street situations and Batwa children. Further efforts were needed to reduce poverty and improve access to clean water and sanitation. She noted that the State continued to face several challenges regarding gender-based violence and domestic servitude. The State Party needed to prioritise the views and best interests of children whilst also considering the views of the family. The Committee extended its help in anyway it could to help the State Party move forward.

Ms Nyiramataama thanked the Committee for the fruitful dialogue and stated it would be returning to the State with some very useful and relevant recommendations which it planned to share with the relevant stakeholders and partners, including the forum of children in Rwanda.