

Ethiopia Country Report

General condition of Ethiopian children

In Ethiopia nearly half of the population (48.6%) are children under the age of 15 years, of which nearly 18% are under the age of 5 years. The country is characterised by a high fertility rate and a rapid population growth. The fertility rate rose from 2.6% during 1970-1990 to 2.7% during 1990-1998. The rapid population growth and other related factors pose a major challenge to the realisation of children's rights. Of the total child population, 85% live in the rural areas and the remaining 15% live in the urban areas. Ethiopia has experienced enormous problems of severe and widespread poverty despite its vast natural resources and has been unable to meet the basic needs of its population in general and children in particular.

Children at risk of needing care outside the family. Other risk groups. Trends during 1998-2001

Street children

There are approximately 150,000 street children in Ethiopian urban areas, of which 40,000 reside in Addis Ababa. These children are mainly engaged in begging or working in the informal sector to earn their livelihood. Reports show that 70% of these children live in destitute families in slum areas. To alleviate the problem the government, in co-operation with UNICEF and NGOs, has introduced rehabilitation and prevention programmes in the major towns of the country. The programme package includes education, health, saving and credit, skills training and shelter services.

Juvenile offenders

Available information shows that in Ethiopia the problem of juvenile offenders has been increasing from time to time owing to the dwindling socio-economic situation in general and poverty in particular. In 1996 222,109 children were reported to the police for committing various offences out of which 1.33% were in the age range of 9-15 years while 9.06% were in the age group 16-18 years; 12.04% were within the age group 19-21 years. The data also show that 90% of the reported offenders were males whereas 10% were females.

With the aim of addressing the problem, efforts have been made by different governmental organisations and NGOs. The efforts made so far include strengthening community-based child protection, awareness-raising of the community on the rights of the child to rehabilitation service, lobbying and advocacy by governmental organisations and NGOs on children's rights. For example, children's judicial cases are now handled in a separate court.

Internally displaced children

Thousands of children and their families were internally displaced from different parts of Ethiopia due to the war between Ethiopia and Eritrea, drought and famine. The available data indicates that there are 458,564 internally displaced persons out of which approximately 40% are under 18 years of age.

In order to rehabilitate internally displaced children governmental organisations and NGOs have been undertaking various programmes targeting children and families and the efforts have saved the lives of thousands of children.

Refugees

Ethiopia has hosted 300,000 refugees from neighbouring countries; namely, Sudan, Somalia, Eritrea, Djibouti and others. The figures obtained from Refugee Camps show that of the total population approximately 22% are in the age group 0-4 years and 38% between 5-17 years.

Child victims of labour exploitation

Research shows that there are seven million children within the age group 10-14 in the country, of which 50% are known to be economically active. Most child labour (56.6%) is in the rural areas while 9.6% is in the urban areas. The figure shows that the majority of the children work in the agricultural sector.

With the aim of alleviating the problem, government organisations and NGOs are undertaking awareness-raising programmes as well as conducting research on the provisions of the CRC regarding child labour exploitation. The government has ratified the Minimum Age Convention No. 138 and has also signed and ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Children. The ratification of the Worst Forms of Child Labour is being processed and the document has been presented to the Parliament for approval.

Children with disabilities

The children in this group have limited access to social and economic opportunities due to physical, mental and sensory impairments as well as a discriminatory attitude on the part of society in general. In order to address the needs and rights of this target group, the Ethiopian government has prepared a National Plan of Action on Disability. Different NGOs have been undertaking various programmes aimed at addressing the needs and rights of children with disabilities.

Orphaned and abandoned children

This category includes children under 18 years of age who have lost both parents because of war, AIDS, drought or famine. These children can easily be exposed to various forms of hazards in that they lack the care and protection of adults. To date, these children have been cared for in institutions located in different parts of the country. The government has designed alternative forms of childcare, cognizant of the adverse effects of institutionalisation. In addition, various NGOs have undertaken a range of programmes and initiatives to improve the situation of these children.

Abused and neglected children

These are children who are exposed to various types of abuse, the major ones being physical abuse, sexual abuse, psychological abuse, harmful traditional practices, and children denied the care and attention of adults. The problem deeply embedded in the cultures and traditions of the society. In light of this intensive efforts have been made by governmental organisations and NGOs to raise the awareness of society in general and parents in particular on the child's right to protection and care as well as to non-institutionalised forms of upbringing using different means. As part of this endeavour, both preventive and rehabilitative measures have been undertaken.

Access to education

Although primary education is free, universal children's school enrolment is low in Ethiopia. Despite the government's efforts to increase the number of schools, there are not enough schools to accommodate the child population of the country. At the national level the total school enrolment of children of school age is 61.6% in school year 2002/03. Pre-primary school enrolment ratio shows that in school year 2002/03 118,986 children in 1189 kindergartens are reported to have access to pre-primary education, of an estimated 5,799,181 children in the age group.

Some 67% of boys of primary school age are enrolled in primary school and 47% of the girls; most attend school on a shift basis. The figure for girls is less than the projected rate of 60% by year 2002.

Gross enrolment ratio

This is the proportion of total enrolment in primary, irrespective of age, out of the corresponding primary school age proportion. In the year 2002/03 the primary school (1-8) age group is estimated to be 13,221,547 out of which 8,144,337 were enrolled in regular and evening programmes of primary education. Thus the Gross Enrolment Ratio for primary school for the year 2002/03 at national level is 61.6%. Table 1 (see the Appendix) shows that the proportion of girls is less than that of boys within the time duration indicated. The data show that there has been a progressive increase in the overall enrolment ratio within the last five years (from 41.8% in 1998 to 61.6% in 2002).

Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) at primary school level

The NER for regular students for the year 2001/02 is 52.2% and does not exclude evening programme due to lack of data classified by gender for this age. Segregated by gender, NER is 45.2% for girls and 59.0% for boys. Table 2 (see the Appendix) shows the Net Enrolment Ratio for primary school for the last five years.

Residential care and the Ethiopian experience

The problems are mainly caused by poverty, HIV/AIDS, death of parents, drought and famine and family breakdown in situations where children have been forcibly displaced from their natural family and community environments and are therefore in need of alternative care service.

The situation has led to a range of serious problems, including family destabilisation, displacement and related forms of social and psychological breakdown. As one of the main consequence, thousands and thousands of children have been exposed to malnutrition and various forms of abuse. Among these are those children termed as children in especially difficult circumstances, which include street children, orphans, children with disabilities, abandoned and unaccompanied children, abused children and children in conflict with the law. The need for residential care has become a necessity in order to address the needs of these children who have been denied the care and protection of the family.

The need for residential care came into being in Ethiopia in the 1950s for the main purpose of providing institutional support for abandoned and unaccompanied children and children from poor families. The services mainly included meals, clothing, and educational support. Many government organisations and NGOs have been provided residential care for children, especially after the drought and famine in the 1980s that resulted in severe socio-economic problems. However, it was found that institutionalisation has its own negative physical, social and psychological effects on the lives of children.

In Ethiopia, thousands of children are living in especially difficult circumstances, including the many children who have been orphaned. A number of residential care centres have since been established by different child-oriented organisations in different parts of the country. The existing data show that there are over 100 institutions that provide residential care services to unaccompanied children.

However, in line with the change in the global trend from institutionalisation to community-based care alternatives and based on the existing reality of children, the government has shifted its focus to the community-based approach of rehabilitating deinstitutionalised children. Consequently, the scope of residential care (institutional service) has decreased progressively. Thus, there is a need to devise alternative strategies aimed at providing better care services that would enable children to integrate with the community and establish meaningful and productive lives. Based on this initiative, efforts are being made to deinstitutionalise the children and reintegrate them with the community.

National policies and legal instruments related to child welfare

The issue of residential care for children is contained in various policy documents of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia.

- **The Constitution of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia** stipulates in Article 36 the rights of the child, which is an indication of the government's firm commitment to ensure the rights of Ethiopian children.
- **The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child:** Ethiopia signed and ratified the UN CRC in 1992 and incorporated the Provisions of the Convention into the Constitution of the country. To translate the CRC into tangible realities, different child-focused programmes have been designed and are currently being implemented in various parts of the country. Based on this, a Guideline on Alternative Childcare Programmes was prepared by the government.
- **The Developmental Social Welfare Policy:** This is a policy document that focuses on promoting social development whereby a environment is created that will enable all citizens to live in peace and fulfil their basic needs. Child welfare is one of the policy's major areas of focus.
- **National Programme of Action for Children and Women: (1996-2000):** The National Programme of Action was developed within the broad perspective of the World Summit for Children of 1990 in which all nations of the world were called upon to chart national programmes of action for the survival, protection and development of children within the framework of each country's overall socio-economic development strategies. The Programme of Action was prepared on the basis of the socio-economic realities of the country and is aimed at ensuring the well-being and development of Ethiopian children.

Basic statistics

Orphaned Children

- 34,000 orphans are being accommodated in 112 government organisations and NGOs;
- 25,000 destitute children are being given different kinds of services together with parents or close relatives;
- From 1974-1990, 2,984 children were adopted by traditional means;
- In 2002, there were 1.2 million orphans under the age of 15 years, taken into account all those children who have lost one or both parents;

- In Ethiopia 10% of the children live without parents.

Disabled children

- It is estimated that there are 2.7 million disabled children in the country;
- Only 1,860 (0.07%) enrolled in special education programmes in Ethiopia;
- From 1999-2002, 3,201 children were adopted in other countries.

Young offenders in correctional facilities

For the statistics over the number of young offenders by gender and year, see Table 3 in the Appendix.

Appendix

Table 1. Gross enrolment ratio in primary school for the period 1998-2002/03 (in %).

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1998	52.0	31.2	41.8
1999	59.9	35.3	45.8
2000	60.9	40.7	51.0
2001	67.3	47.0	57.4
2002	71.7	51.2	61.6

Table 2. Net Enrolment Ratio for primary school for the last five years (in %).

Year	Boys	Girls	Total
1997/98	43.0	28.0	36.0
1998/99	46.9	31.9	39.5
1999/00	51.2	36.6	44.0
2000/01	55.7	41.7	48.8
2001/02	59.0	45.2	52.2

Table 3. Number of young offenders by gender and year.

Age level	1998		1999		2000		2001	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Primary school age	74	–	64	–	92	10	136	17
Post school age	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–