Implementing the 1989 United Nations’ Convention on the Rights of the Child in sub-Saharan Africa: the overlooked socioeconomic and political dilemmas

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Abstract

Objective: The aim of this article is to identify and profile some often overlooked socioeconomic and political factors that render the protection of the rights of the child, as guaranteed through the 1989 United Nations’ Convention on the Rights of the Child, a distant dream in most African countries. It is argued that, in most African countries, there are other major impediments to the protection of the child’s rights in addition to the frequently cited lack of adequate legislation and of political will.

Method: The paper is a review essay and utilizes existing literature from varied sources to advance its main arguments. It draws from such documents to profile the socioeconomic and political barriers to the protection of children’s rights in Africa both at the family and at the national levels.

Core argument: The ratification of the United Nation’s 1989 Convention and the passing of supportive legislation by most state governments, has not resulted in major improvements in the well-being of children. This is as a result of prevailing socioeconomic and political conditions such as social transformations within the family unit, poverty, and rampant corruption. The emergence of HIV/AIDS, civil wars and armed conflicts is a major impediment to the protection of children’s rights across most of Africa.

Conclusion: The effective implementation of the 1989 United Nations’ Convention by African governments requires more than the ratification of the Convention. Governments require the political will to implement its prescriptions by passing supportive legislation. To create the necessary enabling environments, equal emphasis should be placed on the eradication of poverty, corruption and disease; and to ending armed conflicts where they exist.

Keywords

Child abuse; Civil war; HIV/AIDS; Rights of the Child; Poverty
An earlier version of this paper was presented during the 13th International Congress on Child Abuse and Neglect held in Durban, South Africa, September 3–6, 2000.

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