

Editor's Note

Children's Rights in Contemporary Ethiopia

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The adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of Children (CRC) brought about a significant shift in the global discourse on child rights.¹ The key guiding principles in the CRC related to equality, best interest of the child, life, survival and development and participation have attracted the attention of academic and policy research across the globe. In addition to the binding international human rights treaties, several declarations, principles, guidelines, standard rules and recommendations were adopted at different times with the intention of protecting the rights of children. The first regional children's treaty, the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, on its part, encompasses a wide array of rights and obligations for a better advancement of children's rights in the continent.² The aforementioned human right treaties and different legal instruments have played a quintessential role in protecting the rights and welfare of children, providing incontestable scales of moral fortitude, and offering practical guidance to states.

The right based approach adopted by studies focusing on children and childhood across time and spaces have for long outlined the scientific foundation for research paradigms and initiatives protecting children's rights and interests.³ The notion of childhood is complex referring to a life phase of the age group defined as children, and also a cultural construction of the social and economic structure of communities.⁴ As Ncube (1998) argues the normative universality achieved in the definition and formulation of children's

¹ Holzscheiter, Anna, Jonathan Josefsson, and Bengt Sandin. 2019. "Child Rights Governance: An Introduction." *Childhood* 26(3): 271-288.

² Llyod, Amanda. 2002. "A Theoretical Analysis of the Reality of Children's Rights in Africa: An Introduction to the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child." *African Human Rights Law Journal* 2(1): 11-32.

³ Smith, Anne. 2015. *Enhancing Children's Rights: Connecting Research, Policy and Practice*. Palgrave Macmillan.

⁴ Norozi, S. Ali and Torill Moen. 2016. "Childhood as a Social Construction." *Journal of Educational and Social Research* 6(2): 75-80.

rights has to contend with diverse and varied cultural and traditional conceptions of childhood, its role, its rights and obligations.⁵

Ethiopia has ratified numerous international conventions regulating various aspects of the rights of children. The country has further set up national policies, strategies, laws and institutional frameworks related to protection of children's rights. Even though such measures play a significant role in promoting the rights and interests of children, they rarely guarantee the effective implementation of rights constituted in the various instruments. In the context of Ethiopia's diverse socio-cultural environment, social norms and cultural values contribute towards both the protection and violation of rights of children. This volume, focusing on children's right in contemporary Ethiopia, hence aims to present articles that address the theme from different perspectives and a broad range of disciplines, which will contribute to a greater understanding of children's rights in the Ethiopian socio-cultural milieu.

This EJHR issue, thematically focused, publishes high quality papers with a critical perspective on wide variety of perspectives on children's rights. The contribution by Ayalew et al. explores the violations faced by children living in conflict-affected areas, the magnitude of the violations, as well as the impact it has on the rights and welfare of children in Ethiopia. Belayneh's article critically examines the legal and practical framework of deprivation of liberty of children who come in conflict with the law in the Ethiopian child justice system. The contribution by Dureti and Asrat critically reflects on the policy choice that drove the legislator to ban inter-country adoption and the *raison d'être* of the Cassation bench's landmark decisions in light of the best interest of the child and Ethiopia's international human rights commitments. The contribution by Yitaktu et al. engages with child right violation in reference to child marriage by presenting the socio-cultural and religious framing of marriageable age. Binayew and Haimanot's

⁵ Ncube, Welshman. 1998. "Prospects and Challenges in Eastern and Southern Africa: The Interplay Between International Human Rights Norms and Domestic Law, Tradition and Culture." In *Law, Culture, Tradition and Children's Rights in Eastern and Southern Africa*. Welshman Ncube (Ed). Ashgate.

contribution on its part explores the impact of cultural and social norms that violate children's right by referring to the case of Mingi cultural practice among the Kara community in South Omo in Ethiopia. The contribution by Abel and Fasil underscores the existing legal gaps in criminalization of recruitment of children by armed groups, terrorist organizations and paramilitaries in Ethiopia.

The publication of this themed volume on children's rights is of great significance. First, it contributes to the existing gap of literature on children's rights in Ethiopia. Furthermore, the diversity of the contributions is of great significance to the academic contribution it makes to conceptual, theoretical, and methodological discussions on children's rights research.

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