

26th May 2010, Jakarta - Millions of Indonesian children remain vulnerable to abuse, exploitation and discrimination because the government has not prioritised children's rights, says a coalition of NGOs.

On 25 May, the National NGO Coalition for Child Rights Monitoring launched its review report on the implementation of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC) between 1997 and 2009, making a number of recommendations to better protect Indonesian children.

"The government has shown a lack of initiative in integrating the CRC with Indonesian law," said Ahmad Taufan Damanik, executive coordinator for the National NGO Coalition for Child Monitoring in Jakarta.

Among the recommendations are for the government to ratify protocols against the sale of children, child pornography and child prostitution; to amend the constitution to include all rights of the child; and to develop a mechanism whereby legislation conflicting with the CRC can be overturned or revoked.

Contrary to the convention, Indonesian law allows children aged 12 to consent to sex, while the age for criminal responsibility is eight.

"Children as young as 12 can be tried as adults and be imprisoned with adults," Setiawan Cahyo Nugroho, programme manager for child rights at Save the Children Indonesia, told IRIN.

According to the National Commission for Child Protection, 89.8 percent of children sent to court in 2009 were sentenced to prison. Data from the social welfare department at the University of Indonesia shows that 57 percent of those children were placed in detention with adults.

Indonesia ratified the convention in 1990 and in 2002 issued a presidential decree to protect children. The coalition has dubbed the decree inadequate and is calling for a law to address all children's rights, such as the right to free education, freedom of religion and the guarantee of healthcare.

"The decree criminalises perpetrators, but does not protect victims. A law for the protection of children will ensure victims receive counselling and appropriate compensation," Damanik said.

The report is the result of a two-and-a-half year study that consulted 377 children in 14 provinces across the archipelago nation. Among the children surveyed were school dropouts, children from indigenous and religious minorities, survivors of sexual violence and street children.

The government is obliged to submit a progress report to the Committee of the UN CRC every five years; however, the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and Child Protection did not submit its third or fourth report on time.

“We’ve merged the two reports and submitted it to the Foreign Affairs Ministry last month,” said Wahyu Hartomo, assistant to the child protection deputy at the ministry.

The coalition’s report is a stepping stone toward its alternative report, to be submitted to the Committee of the UN CRC for comparison with the government’s findings.

“The government will only report the good things,” Damanik said. “But our report gives a voice to children. Children should be part of the decision-making process in areas that affect them.”

Source: [IRIN](#)