

Do our children have rights?

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Impact paragraphs

The research covers an important area of human rights that does not attract much research attention. Children's rights and human rights in unrecognised States are not subjects that are the focus of research and advocacy. This research attempts to fill the gap. It gives a legal foundation for understanding children's rights in the context of an unrecognised State. Although the focus of the research is on Somaliland and other unrecognised States were not examined, it raises several issues concerning children's rights and unrecognised States. It illustrates the shortcomings of international human rights law in covering children's rights in an inclusive manner and how the narrow categorisation of international legal persons as State and non-State actors limits the universalistic language of human rights treaties.

The research is relevant for the academic community researching children's (human) rights and unrecognised States. It also contributes to understanding the legal obligations of actors involved in the context of unrecognised States. The research findings and recommendations are relevant for UN human rights bodies, treaty-based human rights bodies, nongovernmental organisations, human rights activists, and national authorities. Domestic actors in Somaliland may see this research as relevant in terms of its analysis of international human rights law's obligations and the domestic laws concerning children. In that aspect, international and national laws are analysed to demonstrate children's rights and explore which entities are obligated to protect children's rights and how that works. From a practical perspective, practitioners, including government authorities and activists, may find from the research useful information on international and national laws that would assist them in formulating policies and strategies that further children's rights. The research particularly analyses Domestic laws concerning children, which is essential for all actors working in Somaliland. These include UN specialised agencies that are present in Somaliland and international civil society groups that specialise in children's rights. They will find legal information on Somaliland's legal system and what it says about children's rights.

The research includes information that may help human rights bodies by offering options that would permit unrecognised States to sign human rights treaties. These options would also assist international and national human rights organisations and provide a basis for their advocacy strategies in demanding better protection of children's rights. The practical options offered by the research may contribute to the development of better international human rights mechanisms that respond to the unique characteristics of Somaliland and other unrecognised States with similar features.

This research sets the foundations for further empirical research to collect data to create a complete picture of the socio-legal situation for children in Somaliland and, in particular, to look empirically at how the pluralist legal system of Somaliland consisting of the formal law, Sharia law and Xeer, play out in relation to children's rights.