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## Maat for Peace' Report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child Regarding Ethiopia

December 2025

Maat for Peace, Development, and Human Rights submits this report prior to Ethiopia's review before the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC). This report focuses on providing additional and updated information to the CRC following the information previously submitted by Maat. Maat hopes that the information, statistics, and facts contained in the report will enrich the review process. Before embarking on writing this report, Maat reviewed the consolidated report of the sixth and seventh reports submitted by Ethiopia to the CRC on February 25, 2021. The updated report also adds an assessment of Ethiopia's compliance with the provisions of Article 5 concerning family guidance during development, as well as an evaluation of Ethiopia's implementation of Article 24 concerning children with disabilities and Article 32 regarding engagement in hazardous work or activities that prevent them from accessing education or harm their health or development.

### First: Best Interests of the Child – Article 3

The Ethiopian government does not comply with the principle of the best interests of the child, which is a principle that must be considered in all matters concerning children under the Convention. The Ethiopian government has attempted to take steps to support this direction but has failed in its efforts. The estimated figures indicate that children living in rural areas suffer from multidimensional poverty at double the rate compared to their peers in major urban areas, with rates of 95% and 46% respectively.<sup>1</sup> In addition to the previously submitted information to the CRC, Maat notes that the Ethiopian government has not taken positive measures to address acute malnutrition among children in Ethiopia. The provision of healthcare for these children, who number approximately 116,162 under the age of five suffering from acute malnutrition, has been limited to international organizations.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> UNICEF, Faces of Child Poverty in Ethiopia, 23 March 2021, <https://www.unicef.org/ethiopia/stories/faces-child-poverty>

<sup>2</sup> UNICEF Ethiopia Humanitarian Situation Report No. 5: September to October 2025, <https://h7.cl/1gawu>



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On another side, girls are vulnerable to gender-based violence. Estimates indicate that 90% of the victims of gender-based violence in Ethiopia are girls under the age of 18.<sup>3</sup> As of July 2025, nearly 25% of girls and women aged 15 to 49 years have experienced physical violence since the age of 15. It is evident that 47.1% of girls in Ethiopia aged 15 to 19 have undergone female genital mutilation. Ethiopia is home to 15 million child brides, 6 million of whom are under the age of 15. In every year that conflict persists at its worst levels, the rate of child marriage in Ethiopia may increase by 15%, particularly in the Afar region, where girls as young as 10 or 11 years old are married off.<sup>4</sup> Maat underscores that all of these practices contradict the best interests of the child, which are protected under Article 3 of the Convention.

## Second: Family Guidance During Children's Growth – Article 5

Children face numerous obstacles in receiving guidance from their families, as stated in Article 5 of the Convention. Ethiopian children are increasingly susceptible to violence, armed conflict, clashes, and climate change—all challenges that undermine any efforts by the Ethiopian government and hinder any attempts or policies to activate the rights of Ethiopian children to family and reunification. By December 2025, it was estimated that around 600,000 children and adolescents were homeless due to extreme poverty or family-related challenges.<sup>5</sup>

Up to 100,000 of these children and adolescents live in the capital, Addis Ababa.<sup>6</sup> Approximately 46% of street children in Ethiopia are living with individuals other than their parents due to death, divorce, or separation.<sup>7</sup> Notably, the war in Tigray has led to the separation of more than 30,000 children from their parents, leaving them displaced and facing issues and practices that contradict their entitled rights, which also violates Article 20 of the Convention. Those affected have encountered exploitation, abuse, violence, homelessness, lack of access to basic services, sexual violence, and physical assaults.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>3</sup> AP, Scores of women and girls were sexually assaulted after peace deal in Ethiopia's Tigray, study shows, 2 August 2023, <https://shorter.me/1lg95>

<sup>4</sup> UNICEF, Children in Ethiopia: The Situation of Children in Ethiopia, June 2024, <https://www.unicef.org/ethiopia/children-ethiopia>

<sup>5</sup> 18,000 street children in Ethiopia supported by GOAL's Child SPACE programme over the last 10 years, but continued delivery of the programme under significant financial pressure, 3 July 2023, <https://bitly.co/Qig1>

<sup>6</sup> Goal global, Empowering Homeless Youth in Ethiopia: Melkamu's Story, 16 August 2023, <https://bitly.co/QigC>

<sup>7</sup> Borgen project, 7 FACTS ABOUT HOMELESS CHILDREN IN ETHIOPIA, <https://borgenproject.org/homeless-children-in-ethiopia/>

<sup>8</sup> IOM, DECEPTIVE DREAMS: PROTECTING UNACCOMPANIED MIGRANT CHILDREN IN ETHIOPIA, 29 Jan 2024, <https://bitly.co/QigI>



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Maat For Peace, Development, and Human Rights



**Headquarters:** 148 Misr Helwan El-Zyrae Road, El Matbaa Sq, Hadayek El Maadi, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, No 41, Cairo, Egypt



**Maat Training Center:** 380 Corniche El Nil St., Gawhareet El Maadi Tower, 38<sup>th</sup> Floor, Tower B, Cairo, Egypt



490 El Maadi [www.maatpeace.org](http://www.maatpeace.org)



[maat@maatpeace.org](mailto:maat@maatpeace.org)



00(20) (2) 25266026 00(20) (2) 25266019

+201226521170



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### Third: The Right to Life – Article 6

A guaranteed environment for the right to life is lacking in Ethiopia due to ongoing clashes between the government and other armed groups. This has had negative repercussions on civilians, including children.<sup>9</sup> The ramifications of the Tigray War have resulted in the deaths of 600,000 civilians, including children. Amidst this, children remain the most vulnerable group, most affected by violent armed clashes. From 2023 until July 2025, 80% of victims of unexploded ordnance in rural northern Ethiopia were children, where millions live and work in areas rife with unexploded munitions. This ongoing threat leads to psychological consequences for these children, affecting all aspects of their lives.<sup>10</sup>

Maat notes that the fragile security situation in the Metekel Zone has resulted in continued child fatalities. On November 22, 2025, 40 civilians, including children, were killed in an armed attack in the village of Bakouji in the Metekel area of the Benishangul-Gumuz regional state, according to testimonies from residents.<sup>11</sup> On May 21, clashes occurred between members of the Oromo Liberation Front-Shene and the Ethiopian National Defense Forces after armed individuals attacked civilians in the town of Anger Meti in the Kimash area, resulting in the deaths of at least 18 civilians and injuries to at least 10 others. Among the deceased were 12 children aged between two and 14 years.<sup>12</sup>

### Fourth: Children with Disabilities – Article 23

The Ethiopian government has pledged to adopt comprehensive legislation for persons with disabilities, including children. According to recent developments, the Ministry of Justice has reviewed the law, incorporating recommendations from the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs. Nevertheless, the legal framework still lacks a unified law for this group, who suffer in various regions of Ethiopia, especially in areas affected by armed conflict.<sup>13</sup> Despite statistics indicating that children with disabilities make up approximately 17.6% of children in Ethiopia,<sup>14</sup> the country

<sup>9</sup> EPO, EPO WEEKLY UPDATE (6 FEBRUARY 2024), Access date February 2024, <https://shorter.me/RvJn>

<sup>10</sup> Ethiopia: Children disproportionately affected by weapon contamination, <https://shorturl.at/X4RBM>

<sup>11</sup> Over 40 civilians, including children, killed in latest attack, <https://h7.cl/1g8NU>

<sup>12</sup> Ethiopia situation update (11 June 2025), <https://acleddata.com/update/ethiopia-situation-update-11-june-2025>

<sup>13</sup> Marginalized Multitudes: Accessibility and Inclusion for PwD, <https://thereportermagazines.com/3490/>

<sup>14</sup> World Vision, Break barriers people with disabilities are facing, June 2024, <https://bit.ly.co/Qigr>



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Maat For Peace, Development, and Human Rights



**Headquarters:** 148 Misr Helwan El-Zyrae Road, El Matbaa Sq, Hadayek El Maadi, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, No 41, Cairo, Egypt



**Maat Training Center:** 380 Corniche El Nil St., Gawharet El Maadi Tower, 38<sup>th</sup> Floor, Tower B, Cairo, Egypt



490 El Maadi [www.maatpeace.org](http://www.maatpeace.org)



[maat@maatpeace.org](mailto:maat@maatpeace.org)



00(20) (2) 25266026 00(20) (2) 25266019

+201226521170



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still lacks a database for children with disabilities that classifies these children based on gender, age, and type of disability.

## Fifth: Right to Health, Water, and Food – Article 24

The Ethiopian government is not fully implementing Article 24 of the Convention. The government has failed to reduce infant mortality rates in Ethiopia. According to World Bank research, the infant mortality rate remains high at 36 deaths per 1,000 live births.<sup>15</sup> Ethiopia is still home to a large number of epidemics and diseases, primarily malaria, HIV, and tuberculosis. By 2025, infant mortality rates are still projected to reach 36.25 deaths per 1,000 live births, which are among the highest rates in the world. Recent research reviewed by Maat in October 2025 indicates that infectious diseases are the leading cause of death in 80.4% of post-neonatal children, varying from 74.3% in Wolkite County to 100% in Mai Tschu County. However, the prevalence of these causes varies between counties. For instance, diarrhea is the leading cause of post-neonatal death in three counties, while acute respiratory infections are the leading cause in two counties, and malaria is the primary cause in one county. HIV is the third leading cause of death.<sup>16</sup>

In this context, the percentage of AIDS orphans in Ethiopia is the highest among AIDS orphans in Sub-Saharan Africa, with approximately 886,820 children affected. Malnutrition accounts for 45% of deaths among children under five, while stunting affects over 5.4 million Ethiopian children under five (39%), which is one in every ten children in that age group.<sup>17</sup> Children continue to be deprived of the right to clean water and do not have access to improved sanitation services. According to statistics, 93% of children under five do not have access to improved sanitation services, and over 38.4% of children under five do not have access to improved water supply services.<sup>18</sup> Regarding children's right to food, Ethiopian children are suffering from one of the worst food crises in the world, affecting 3.9 million children and leading to acute malnutrition, which is equivalent to half of all those suffering from malnutrition across the Horn of Africa.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Toxic roads: How infrastructure development can undermine infant health, <https://shorturl.at/KNuVi>

<sup>16</sup> Causes of under-five child Mortality in Tigray Region, North Ethiopia A retrospective verbal autopsy study, Page 6, <https://h7.cl/1gaxA>

<sup>17</sup> UNICEF, For every child, nutrition! access date February 2024, <https://www.unicef.org/ethiopia/every-child-nutrition>

<sup>18</sup> UNICEF, Faces of Child Poverty in Ethiopia, June 2024, <https://www.unicef.org/ethiopia/stories/faces-child-poverty>

<sup>19</sup> Save the children, ETHIOPIA: TOUGH MONTHS AHEAD AS RAINS FAIL FOR THE FIFTH SEASON IN A ROW WITH MILLIONS IN NEED OF URGENT FOOD ASSISTANCE, 13 Jan 2023, <https://bityl.co/Qih1>



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**Headquarters:** 148 Misr Helwan El-Zyrae Road, El Matbaa Sq, Hadayek El Maadi, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor, No 41, Cairo, Egypt



**Maat Training Center:** 380 Corniche El Nil St., Gawhareet El Maadi Tower, 38<sup>th</sup> Floor, Tower B, Cairo, Egypt



490 El Maadi [www.maatpeace.org](http://www.maatpeace.org)



[maat@maatpeace.org](mailto:maat@maatpeace.org)



00(20) (2) 25266026 00(20) (2) 25266019

+201226521170



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This crisis is responsible for 28% of child deaths in Ethiopia due to malnutrition, affecting 38.6% and 7% of children in terms of stunting and wasting, respectively.<sup>20</sup>

### Sixth: The Right to Education – Article 28

A significant number of children remain deprived of education, with approximately 3.5 million additional children at risk of dropping out of school.<sup>21</sup> On another front, 39% of girls in Ethiopia are out of school. These are significant statistics that contradict Ethiopia's constitutional commitments to guarantee that women and girls are not subjected to discrimination. The number of schools has declined; reports indicate that more than 6,000 schools in Ethiopia have closed, and over 10,000 other schools have been partially or completely destroyed, leading to barriers in accessing education. Independent reports indicate an increase in threats, intimidation, and sexual harassment against female students, with perpetrators identified as both teachers and fellow students, particularly in the Amhara and Oromia regions.<sup>22</sup>

### Seventh: Protection from Harmful Work – Article 32

According to reports reviewed by Maat, child labor, a shortage of labor inspectors, and a weak legal framework regarding child labor continue to pose challenges in Ethiopia, undermining the protection of children from harmful work in accordance with Article 32 of the Convention. Estimated figures indicate a high prevalence of child labor, affecting approximately 15 million children, with statistics showing that 48% of children aged five to nine are engaged in work.<sup>23</sup> Despite the Ethiopian government's announcement of several initiatives aimed at addressing child labor, independent follow-up reveals that Ethiopia has made no significant progress in eradicating child labor and, at times, has been complicit in forced labor. This also contradicts the African Union's Action Plan to eliminate child labor and modern slavery across the continent.

### Eighth: Protection from Sexual Exploitation – Article 34

<sup>20</sup> UNICEF, For every child, nutrition! JUNE 2024, <https://www.unicef.org/ethiopia/every-child-nutrition>

<sup>21</sup> Relief Web, Increasing Number of Children Pushed Out of Education in Ethiopia Due to Severe Drought, Conflict and Forced Displacement, December 2023, <https://shorter.me/zylk>

<sup>22</sup> Female students in Ethiopia facing more intimidation – Watchdog, <https://h7.cl/1g8MN>

<sup>23</sup> OHCHR, Ethiopia: Critical moment to strengthen fight against trafficking in the Tigray, Afar, and Amhara, 3 October 2023. <https://shorter.me/1PTnJ>



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00(20) (2) 25266026

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+201226521170



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In November 2025, Ethiopia hosted an international conference to eliminate violence, including sexual exploitation against children.<sup>24</sup> However, some organizations have called for accountability regarding instances of sexual exploitation by security forces of the Ethiopian government in Tigray and Afar, but these calls have not been fulfilled.<sup>25</sup> The ongoing internal conflicts in which the Ethiopian government is engaged, such as the wars in the Tigray, Afar, and Oromia regions, have led to an increase in sexual exploitation practices against children in Ethiopia, amidst weak mechanisms for accessing justice or rehabilitating victims. Furthermore, online sexual exploitation of children is prevalent in Ethiopia. Available statistics indicate that 300,000 children aged 12 to 17 have been victims of violence, exploitation, and sexual abuse online, representing 10% of children using the internet within a year. This situation is attributed to the weak, fragile, and unclear mechanisms for reporting cases of sexual abuse and exploitation of children.<sup>26</sup>

## Recommendations

- Reassess the newborn registration system to ensure their right to a name, nationality, and identity as recognized rights-bearing citizens.
- Urgently issue comprehensive legislation for persons with disabilities to guarantee the rights of children within this category.
- Establish a database for children with disabilities that classifies this group based on gender, age, and type of disability.
- Work towards increasing educational opportunities for girls, especially those affected by conflict in the Tigray region who have dropped out of the educational process.
- Call on the government to enhance infrastructure for the birth registration and identity verification system in Ethiopia to ensure comprehensive services for registering births and covering vital statistics.
- Encourage the government to update data related to complaints of sexual exploitation against children, particularly in rural areas.

<sup>24</sup> UNICEF, WHO Africa, and partners agree to intensify efforts to end violence against children, <https://h7.cl/113K4>

<sup>25</sup> Silence over sexual violence in Ethiopia enables yet more abuse, says report, <https://h7.cl/113Kv>

<sup>26</sup> ECPAT, Launch of the Disrupting Harm Report for Ethiopia on Technology and the Sexual Exploitation of Children, ACCESS DATE 28 January 2023, <https://bit.ly/3ReBVVt>



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490 El Maadi [www.maatpeace.org](http://www.maatpeace.org)



[maat@maatpeace.org](mailto:maat@maatpeace.org)



00(20) (2) 25266026 00(20) (2) 25266019

+201226521170



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- Consider increasing the number of labor inspectors and monitoring establishments employing children, imposing penalties in line with the African Union's Action Plan to eliminate child labor.



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00(20) (2) 25266026 00(20) (2) 25266019

+201226521170