



Position Paper

Universal Periodic Review – Madagascar 20th session 27 October – 7 November 2014

The Istituto Internazionale Maria Ausiliatrice (IIMA), the organisation International Volunteerism Organisation for Women, Education and Development and (VIDES International), Franciscans International (FI) and Apprentis d'Auteuil¹ have submitted a report on children's rights in Madagascar as part of the Universal Periodic Review twentieth session.

In a context of acute political instability and budget restriction (notably the education budget), these organisations have witnessed a general rise of poverty among the Madagascan population and very few evolutions in the way children are taken into account in the State's public policies.

Currently, in Madagascar:

- 53.4% of the population is underage².
- 82% of those 10 million underage children live below the official poverty line and lack access to health services, education, housing, water, sanitation, protection and to information³.
- 50% Madagascan children suffer growth delay due to chronic malnutrition⁴.
- More and more families have started living on the street and as a result cannot undertake their parental duties such as providing their children access to health, education and their basic needs: food, hygiene, clothing, etc.

During Madagascar's last UPR session in 2010, the Madagascan state gave its support to several recommendations regarding the improvement of children and young people's living conditions, and committed to:

- continue the education reform in order to ensure free primary education for all girls and boys (recommendation by Norway)⁵
- establish an institution to supervise and evaluate the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in particular, to implement a plan of action to protect and reintegrate street children (recommendation by Mexico)⁶

¹ In cooperation with its local partners : Le Centre Energie, Graines de Bitume, Hardi.

² UNICEF, Analyse de la pauvreté des enfants à Madagascar, 2010.

³ *Ibid*

⁴ World Bank, Madagascar, measuring the impact of the political crisis: <http://www.banquemondiale.org/fr/news/feature/2013/06/05/madagascar-measuring-the-impact-of-the-political-crisis>, 2013.

⁵ Recommendation 61 of the Working Group for the Universal Periodical Review of Madagascar, A/HRC/14/13, 26 march 2010

⁶ Recommendation 20 of the Working Group for the Universal Periodical Review of Madagascar, A/HRC/14/13, 26 march 2010

In 2014, we still observe great difficulties for Madagascan children in accessing education, as well as the persistence of the phenomenon of children in street situation across the country.

1. A hindered access to education for Madagascan children

During Madagascar's last UPR session in 2010, the Madagascar Republic committed to ensure free, mandatory primary education for all girls and boys by supporting Norway's recommendation.

Our organisations observe that primary education is not currently free: fees are often requested from parents by schools in order to compensate for teachers' low and varying wages. These fees give rise to a high level of absenteeism among pupils. They also lead families to only send their eldest child or one of their sons to schools, and to make them drop out of school if they have to repeat a year. As a result, the schooling rate is still low while the drop-out rate is high among schooled children.

The number of schools in the country does not match the number of school-aged children, especially in poor areas where a lot of "FRAM" teachers – namely teachers who are not employed by the State and thus have to be paid by pupils' parents organisations – work. As a result, the costs of public education are the highest in the poorest areas of the country.

The education system is not quantitative: the teaching staff is insufficiently trained and skilled and class sizes range from 45 to 90 pupils. The education system does not include disabled children.

The President and the National Education Minister have recently made announcements regarding education: teachers' recruitment and training, "refreshers' classes", free public school for 2014-2015. These measures have not so far been implemented.

The Government has also announced its wish to bring back to school the 500,000 to 1 million children who have dropped out of school during the institutional crisis and unrest. This ambition is laudable but does not seem realistic considering the budget allocated to education and the lack of infrastructures and teachers.

Question

- *Which concrete measures does the Republic of Madagascar intend to implement in order to respect its commitment to ensure qualitative, accessible and free education for all children, especially in the framework of the Interim Education Plan" for 2013-2015?*

Recommendations:

- *Ensure free primary education for all, by eliminating direct and indirect costs for students' families and by increasing the number and capacities of public educational institutions.*
- *Continue efforts to increase children's schooling rate and to reduce the drop-out rate especially for girls and children living in poverty.*

2. Children in street situation: an acute phenomenon in Madagascar

The population's impoverishment and declining social status have led a lot of families to start living on the street. These families' children are especially vulnerable. As vagrants, they are submitted to

all sorts of temptations (theft, robbery, gambling, alcohol, gangs...) and to ill-treatment (sexual abuse, drugs, physical violence...)

Because of their very precarious socio-economic situation, some children have to beg on public squares, whether they live in the street or not.

Since the 1980's, successive housing policies have tried to solve part of the problem. These projects have failed due to a lack of follow up and financial means. Big cities and densely populated area could not be relieved. Unemployment, prostitution and crime have risen in these areas.

Those who do have access to housing live in very precarious habitats that are made out of wood, cardboard, plastic, and are often situated in flood-prone areas.

Many children and young people live and/or work on the street in Antananarivo, working odd jobs in difficult conditions (handling, water-carrying, cleaning, car-watching...). The exact number is unknown because no recent and reliable data is available on this subject. Most NGOs⁷ estimate that there are 3,000 to 4,000 of them in Antananarivo. The civil society platform for childhood initiated the implementation of an Observatory of the child, which should undertake a statistical study on the number of children in street situation, with results coming out in 2015.

These children are severely affected by their lack of access to food, health, education, housing, water and sanitation, protection and information. Whether with their families (on the street), within a gang or sometimes by themselves, these children are out of school with no qualification and therefore are compromising their future.

Questions:

- *During the 2010 UPR cycle, the Republic of Madagascar committed to better protecting children, including children in street situation. How does Madagascar intend to make this commitment a renewed priority?*
- *How does the Republic of Madagascar intend to combine its housing policy with an efficient socio-economic integration policy towards the most vulnerable groups?*

Recommendations:

- *Implement an efficient and coherent child protection system, which includes a strong partnerships with non-governmental organisations and adequate training for educators working with children in street situation.*
- *Support children in street situation and their families on educational, social and economic aspects through prevention and awareness-raising actions against stigmatization and discrimination.*
- *Ensure free and effective access to health and to leisure activities for Madagascar's most vulnerable population.*
- *Develop housing solutions for children in street situation and their families and carry on reintegration programs in collaboration with non-governmental organisations.*

⁷ Organisations : Centre Energie, Graine de Bitume, Hardi et Enda OI, civil society platform for childhood.