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Universal Periodic Review (UPR)
for

Democratic Republic of the Congo

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An NGO Submission by

Marist International Solidarity Foundation (FMSI)
(Special Consultative Status with UN ECOSOC)

Submitted in Geneva, 16th September 2013

1. This stake-holder's report is a submission from the Marist International Solidarity Foundation (FMSI). FMSI is an NGO in consultative status with UN ECOSOC and it has a special focus on promoting and protecting the rights of children. This Organisation was established in 2007 in Italy as a Not-for-Profit Organisation with a Social Purpose (FMSI-ONLUS) and has a presence in eighty countries.
2. The concerns highlighted in this submission are related to the right to education, focusing particularly on the provision of free and compulsory basic education for all children, teacher training, the conditions of the teacher salaries and conditions and school dropout rates. Information contained in this report comes from research carried out by FMSI personnel in the DRC around the northern Kivu and Southern Kivu region, along with access to relevant data on the web.
3. The population of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) was 65,705,000 million in 2012 and land area of 2,345,410 square kilometres. The average population density is 28.01 inhabitants per square kilometre. The average age of the population is 17.27 years. Children under 15 years of age number 29,639,000 million, representing approximately 45% of the total population. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) study in 2012 ranks the DRC the second lowest - 186 of the 187 countries listed in its Human Development Index which assesses life expectancy (i.e. health), educational attainment and incomeⁱ.
4. According to the Brookings Report (2013)ⁱⁱ, "over the last two years the government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) has doubled the proportion of the national budget going to education from 6.5 percent to 13.8 percent. Such a large increase is uncommon. More than doubling the percent of the national budget appropriated to education is indicative of a greater shift in national priorities to move education up the ladder of importance. Still, for this commitment to translate into positive outcomes for the millions of children who are in school but currently not learning, and the 7 million primary school-age children who are out of school, the DRC and its partners must address challenges made more complex by on-going conditions of insecurity. ...Despite the steep change in recent budget allocations to education, the country has a long way to go in reaching universal primary enrollment and improving the quality of education available to all the children in its country"ⁱⁱⁱ.

Provision of free and compulsory education and school drop out

5. Article 43 of the Constitution of the DRC^{iv} confirms everyone's right to education and that it is to be compulsory and free in public schools. It also specifies that national education consists of public and private schools duly established. The government needs to do more in financial assistance for the private school system, which exists to help the government achieve access to education for all.

6. At its last Review, several states made recommendations to the government to continue its efforts towards providing free education for all and to increase the national education budget. These recommendations included
 - 94.114. *Continue the comprehensive efforts to improve the system of education. (Belarus);*
 - 94.116. *Guarantee effectively that education is free for all children. (Holy See);*
 - 94.118. *Increase available resources for education. (Angola);*
 - 94.120. *Give priority to free education in the national budget allocations and take measures to prevent school dropout. (Uruguay)^v.*
7. Whilst the government of the DRC has made significant efforts to improve the education system such as to increase the number of schools, improve teacher salaries and lower the dropout rate, our sources on the ground point towards the urgent need for even greater efforts in this area.
8. In spite of the Constitution of the State declaring that education must be free, in fact a family must pay fees. For primary schools the fee is US\$72 per student and for secondary school, the fee is US\$180 per year to supplement the salary of the teachers and to cover the costs of school maintenance. This amount can vary from one region to another, but this is the lowest fee. This, along with the high level of poverty, combine to be a major cause of school non- enrolment and drop out. Families simply do not have the money to pay school fees. Poverty, combined with the lack of schools close to communities – especially in the rural areas - prevent many children from attending school. 53 percent of those not in school are girls.
9. The lack of education by parents is another factor that works against children attending school (43 percent of the adult population is illiterate). Coupled with this are the traditions of early marriage and the use of child labour, especially in agriculture and mining.
10. 45 percent of all children who enrol in primary school end up dropping out before completing their education, with poverty being the main factor in this regard. 70 percent of the population live below the poverty line^{vi}. The destination of many young people who drop out from school has a serious impact on the security of the country and on its social life in general. These young people join either illegal mining sites or the militias. The girls are obliged either to get married before the legal age or take up prostitution just so as to provide for their own needs and survival.

Low salary of teachers and low qualifications

11. According to the Minister of Primary, Secondary and Professional Studies website (Mr Mwangu Famba Hacedor), the DRC has established a number of strategies to promote teacher motivation. Notably, in addition to teacher training, the plan includes:
 - providing health cover for the teacher and his family.

- the direct payment of the teacher's salary through the banks.
 - an increase in basic salary (in 2013 it was increased of \$30).
 - an award for the best teacher^{vii}.
12. Nonetheless, the situation is still dire. Primary school teachers are mostly secondary school graduates while secondary school teachers are required to hold a university degree. However, since the salary of teachers is low, many do not stay long in education. As a consequence, there are many undergraduate teachers in secondary schools, especially in rural areas where the parents are not able to contribute towards their salary.
13. A secondary school graduate earns 71,195 Congolese Francs (US\$75) and a university undergraduate teacher earns 74,897 Congolese Francs (US\$79) per month. A university graduate teacher earns 76,711 Congolese Francs (US\$81) per month. With this salary one is not able to pay for the basic needs of housing, food and clothing for one's family. Such a low salary leads to the social devaluation of the profession; teachers are not well motivated and lack enthusiasm and very few young people are attracted to teaching as a career, resulting in 30 percent of teachers being over 50 years of age.

Rehabilitation of schools

14. In order to implement free primary education, the Ministry of Primary, Secondary and Professional Education has made efforts towards paying the operating costs of government primary schools through its Project for Recovery of the Education Sector. 26,210 schools have obtained access to funds through this project with an investment of \$5,852,867. In the same way UNOPS, on behalf of the Government and World Bank, has funded the renovation of 58 primary schools, catering for around 30,000 students.^{viii-ix}
15. However, there are major differences between rural schools and those in the cities, with the rural schools missing out^x. As well, there is a lack of adequate facilities for children with disabilities to gain access to schools^{xi}. The fact remains that the government must built new schools, adequately equipped, to cater for the huge numbers of children not in school. An even stronger financial commitment towards education by the government is necessary^{xii}.

RECOMMENDATIONS ON EDUCATION TO THE DR OF THE CONGO

- 1. Ensure that all teachers are fully qualified before they enter the classroom.**
- 2. Further increase the investment in education to improve the working conditions and salaries of teachers and to totally eliminate school fees.**
- 3. Increase efforts to cooperate with international organizations towards the attainment of an education infrastructure that provides free and compulsory education for all children.**
- 4. Promote awareness campaigns to parents on the importance of their children attending school and to avoid dropouts.**

END NOTES

ⁱ UNDP: United Nations Development Programme.

<http://www.undp.org/content/dam/undp/library/corporate/HDR/2013GlobalHDR/English/HDR2013%20Report%20English.pdf>. Retrieved 15th September 2013, p.147

ⁱⁱ <http://www.brookings.edu/blogs/up-front/posts/2013/03/01-education-reform-congo-winthrop>; retrieved 15th September 2013.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.

^{iv} <http://www.constitutionnet.org/files/DRC%20-%20Congo%20Constitution.pdf>

Article 43: “All persons have the right to a school education. It is provided by national education. National education consists of public establishments and approved private establishments. The law defines the conditions for the creation and functioning of these establishments. The parents have the right to choose the way in which their children are educated. Primary education is compulsory and free in the public establishments.”

^v Human Rights Council 13th session, 4 January 2010. A/HRC/13/8.

http://lib.ohchr.org/HRBodies/UPR/Documents/Session6/CD/A_HRC_13_8_COD_E.pdf page.19

^{vi} <http://www.unicef.es/actualidad-documentacion/blog/%E2%80%9C%C2%A1munde-munde-los-ni%C3%B1os-rep%C3%BAblica-democr%C3%A1tica-del-congo-y-el-derech>; retrieved 15th September 2013.

^{vii} <http://www.eduquepsp.cd/>

^{viii} <http://www.unops.org/english/whatwedo/UNOPSinaction/Pages/Renovated-schools-improve-education-in-DR-Congo.aspx>, retrieved 15th September 2013

^{ix} <http://www.eduquepsp.cd/>, retrieved 15th September 2013

^x <http://www.unicef.es/actualidad-documentacion/blog/%E2%80%9C%C2%A1munde-munde-los-ni%C3%B1os-rep%C3%BAblica-democr%C3%A1tica-del-congo-y-el-derech>, retrieved 15th September 2013

^{xi} <http://www.fmreview.org/DRcongo/childdisability.htm>, retrieved 15th September 2013

^{xii} http://www.unicef.org/spanish/education/drcongo_58248.html, retrieved 15th September 2013