



**Human Rights Council
Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of Madagascar
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**Joint Stakeholders' Submission on:
Human Rights in Madagascar**

Submitted by:

Marist International Solidarity Foundation (FMSI)

(NGO in Consultative Status with ECOSOC)

and

Marist Brothers of Madagascar

Geneva, July 2024

I. MEMBERS OF THE STAKEHOLDERS' COALITION

1. **FMSI**: The Marist International Solidarity Foundation is an international NGO in Special Consultative Status with ECOSOC and operating in 68 countries. FMSI was established in 2007 and has a special focus on promoting and protecting the rights of children through supporting projects, especially the access to quality education and advocacy.

2. The **Marist Brothers of Madagascar** celebrate their establishment on the island on January 17, 1912. Their dedication is centered on educating young Malagasy people, with approximately 11,000 students enrolled across seven schools. The primary mission of the Marist Brothers in Madagascar is to provide both education and academic knowledge to the youth. Beyond academics, the schools also offer extracurricular activities, including scouting and sports like football, basketball, and volleyball. The Marist Brothers' commitment to educating children and young people contributes to building a brighter future for them.

II. INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

3. This stakeholders' report is a joint submission of the above-mentioned organizations. The report highlights key concerns related to the rights of children in Madagascar, focusing on the following 3 key areas:

- a) Access to education
- b) Right to protection
- c) Right to health care

4. This coalition welcomes the constructive participation of Madagascar in the Universal Periodic Review (UPR). Madagascar was last reviewed on 11 November 2019 at the 34th Session of the UPR Working Group. On this occasion, Madagascar received 203 recommendations, of which it accepted 163 recommendations and noted 29. The present joint submission represents the follow-up to the UPR recommendations accepted by the State in 2019, and in particular recommendations 121.136 (Sudan), 121.137 (Tunisia), and 121.150 (Egypt) by calling to continue efforts to strengthen and protect the rights of children.

5. The data and information obtained for this submission came from various sources and includes information from schools and NGO personnel, children and young people, including:

- a) **École Bon Pasteur**: A school run by the Good Shepherd Sisters in Diego-Suarez. This is a Catholic school that offers both primary and secondary education.
- b) **École Privée Pain de Sucre**: A private school in Diego-Suarez that collaborates with the Marist school in promoting child rights.
- c) **Saint Joseph School**: A Marist school in Diego-Suarez. As a Marist school, the promotion of child rights is among its priority activities in the region.

- d) **Saint Champagnat**: A Marist school in Antananarivo. The promotion of child rights is a priority for children in the capital of the country.
- e) **Collège Saint Jean Baptiste**: A school run by Religious Sisters in Fianarantsoa. In collaboration with the Marist school, this school promotes child rights.
- f) **École Divine Providence**: A school run by Religious Sisters in Fianarantsoa. The school works with the Marist school in promoting child rights.
- g) **École Saint Charles**: A Marist school in Fianarantsoa. The promotion of child rights is a priority in collaboration with other school partners.
- h) **Excelsior**: A private school in Antsirabe that runs primary classes and promotes child rights in collaboration with the Marist schools.
- i) **Saint Martin**: A school run by the Raguse Sisters in Antsirabe, offering both primary and secondary education. It works with the Marist schools to promote child rights.
- j) **Sainte Famille**: A school run by the Fatima Sisters in Antsirabe, situated in a suburban area, welcoming children from low-income families.
- k) **Collège Immaculée Conception**: A Marist school in Antsirabe. The promotion of child rights is among its priority activities.
- l) **Sainte Jacinta**: A school run by the Fatima Sisters in Antsirabe. It collaborates with the Marist school in promoting child rights.
- m) **Le Pilier**: A private school in Antsirabe that collaborates with the Marist school in promoting child rights.
- n) **Tsaravavaka**: A school run by the Raguse Sisters in Antsirabe. It works closely with the Marist school in promoting child rights.
- o) **Saint Pierre Chanel**: A Marist school in Ihosy. The promotion of child rights is a priority activity, and encouraging school attendance is vital for children in the region.
- p) **Saint Vincent de Paul**: A Marist school in Betroka. Promoting child rights and education for children is a priority in the region, as well as encouraging education among parents.
- q) **Association ZAZAKELY**, created in 2001, offers more than 280 children kindergarten school within the association, then takes care of their school fees until they finish their studies.
- r) **ZAZA MENDRIKA Association**, opened in 2013, which aims to give disadvantaged children opportunity to start life with the necessary assets that will allow them to acquire a sustained schooling.
- s) **TSINJO LAVITRA Association**, founded in 2003, offers disadvantaged children in the commune of Antsirabe and the surrounding area to enable them to benefit from a regular schooling
- t) **Association TOLORY TSIKY**, works in favor of disadvantaged children and more specifically sick children hospitalized in Antsirabe.
- u) **SPV FELANA**, was established in Antsirabe in 2006, which offers schooling from Preparatory Class to 3rd grade with 210 children from the Androvakely district.
- v) **SOS VILLAGE D'ENFANTS MADAGASCAR**, since 1989, it has aimed to take care of children without parental support, to allow the child to live a stable and happy childhood by recreating a substitute family environment.

- w) **ASSOCIATION MITSIKY**, created in 2006, welcomes more than 30 children from disadvantaged families, it accommodates the children in its boarding school, and offers them schooling in neighboring schools.
- x) **NGO MAHASOA** aims to create a primary school on the outskirts of the city of Antsirabe, it educates 150 children aged 6 to 13 free of charge, who do not have access to education due to lack of financial means and transport.
- y) **FOYER KOLOINA**, welcomes 24 young girls from 6 to 18 years old, removed from their families because of abuse or various services and placed on the order of the children's judge, the home provides them with moral and physical security, access to care and education as well as to vocational training.
- z) **ASSOCIATION MAISON KILONGA**, provides schooling and accommodation to 18 street children from breakdown situation family.
- aa) **GRANDIR A ANTSIRABE**, has the mission of guaranteeing the fundamental rights of children in vulnerable situations in order to promote their individual development and their good integration into Malagasy society.
- bb) **NGO FITSINJO**, created in 2009, schooling 400 children from Preparatory Class to 3rd grade, including about 30 disabled children, from poor families in the Antsongo district.
- cc) **ASSOCIATION ENFANTS DU SOLEIL**, established in Antsirabe since 1995, has a listening center that welcomes 12 street children aged 5 to 10 every evening, it is a village of 110 street children benefiting from the payment of school fees as well as a help and work center.
- dd) **COLLEGE PICOT DE CLORIVIERE**: founded by the Daughters of the Heart of Mary, a private educational establishment that today welcomes children who cannot have access to public school, from the Preparatory Class to the 3rd class.
- ee) **BEMIRAY ASSOCIATION**, supports the most disadvantaged children in their schooling and works to improve their living conditions in terms of health and food in the long term.
- ff) **ASIMCA ASSOCIATION**, founded in 1990 in response to the inadequacy of the care of disabled children, and protection of the Motor and Cerebral infirm of Antsirabe.

6. The data was collected through interviews and research during the months of December 2023 to May 2024. All information covers the period from the previous UPR of Madagascar held in November 2019 to July 2024.

III. ACCESS TO EDUCATION

7. This stakeholders' coalition commends the government of Madagascar for accepting recommendations no. 121.90¹, 121.88², 121.93³, 121.91⁴, 121.92⁵, 121.125⁶, 121.131⁷ to improve access to education.

8. Madagascar has made progress in promoting children's rights through its partnership with UNICEF⁸. This partnership has enabled the implementation of activities and policies aimed at protecting children and promoting their well-being. However, challenges persist, and additional efforts are needed to ensure comprehensive protection and improved well-being of Malagasy children.

8. In the efforts made in different areas of development, Madagascar has not yet succeeded in making children's education a national priority⁹. Children's education in Madagascar remains an area where much progress must be made. The obstacles are multiple: lack of adequate school infrastructure, shortage of qualified teaching staff, and limited financial resources. These challenges hamper the country's ability to provide quality education to all its children, thereby compromising their future and that of the country.

9. The underinvestment in education by the Madagascar government allocates only 2.8% of its GDP to education, which is significantly lower than the recommended global benchmark. This limited investment translates to a lack of qualified teachers, overcrowded classrooms, and inadequate learning materials.

10. A low national literacy¹⁰ rate hovering around 80% shows a significant portion (20%) of the population as illiterate. This illiteracy hinders their ability to find decent employment,

¹ 121.90 Take new measures to provide for inclusive, quality education (Armenia); A/HRC/43/13 - Para.121

² 121.88 Increase the annual budget allocations for the education sector in order to guarantee free education in primary and secondary schools for all of Madagascar's children and take action to decrease the early school dropout rate (United Republic of Tanzania); A/HRC/43/13 - Para.121

³ 121.93 Redouble efforts regarding access to education for children in rural areas, as well as access to adequate health services for vulnerable sections of the population, in particular women, children, older people and persons with disabilities (Mauritius); A/HRC/43/13 - Para.121

⁴ 121.91 Accelerate efforts to reach the objectives on inclusive education in the national sector plan, especially with regard to children with disabilities and children in geographically isolated areas (Norway); A/HRC/43/13 - Para.121

⁵ 121.92 Continue efforts to achieve equal access to education for all (Libya); A/HRC/43/13 - Para.121

⁶ 121.125 Continue its efforts to ensure gender equality, gender-neutral policies, child rights related to access to education, health and social services (India); A/HRC/43/13 - Para.121

⁷ 121.131 Ensure compliance with existing legislation to eliminate discrimination against women (Luxembourg); A/HRC/43/13 - Para.121

⁸ Children's rights | UNICEF Madagascar - <https://www.unicef.org/madagascar/en/topics/childrens-rights>

⁹ Madagascar: Making Education a Priority | UNICEF USA - <https://www.unicefusa.org/stories/madagascar-making-education-priority>

¹⁰ [Madagascar Population 2024 \(Live\) \(worldpopulationreview.com\)](https://www.worldpopulationreview.com/population-statistics/madagascar-population-2024/)

participate effectively in civic life, and contribute meaningfully to the country's development.

11. This Stakeholders' coalition recommends the Government of Madagascar to:

- a) Increase government spending on education to improve teacher salaries, build new schools, and provide adequate learning materials.***
- b) Invest in early childhood education programs to provide a strong foundation for lifelong learning and development.***
- c) Implement targeted programs to increase inclusive access to quality education particularly for girls in rural areas***

IV. RIGHT TO PROTECTION

12. Despite the government of Madagascar accepted several recommendations on child protection¹¹, child abuse is disturbingly high in Madagascar. Children experience physical, emotional, and sexual abuse¹², often at the hands of trusted adults like parents, teachers, or caregivers. This pervasive violence not only harms individual children but also disrupts their development and perpetuates a cycle of abuse in future generations.

13. The cultural issue that accepts physical punishment and normalizes violence as a normal form of discipline hinders efforts to create a safe and nurturing environment for children.

14. This Stakeholders' coalition recommends the Government of Madagascar to:

- a) Launch public awareness campaigns to discourage violence against children, elimination of child labour and promote positive parenting practices.***
- b) Develop and strengthen support services for victims of child abuse, including counseling and legal assistance.***
- c) Review and strengthen legislation related to child protection and ensure proper enforcement of existing laws.***

¹¹121.62 Strengthen existing legislation to ensure that all forms of modern slavery and human trafficking are criminalized in line with international conventions and standards, including the sexual exploitation of children (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland); 121.110 Enhance measures aimed at combating traditional stereotypes and gender inequality, in particular through investigating and punishing cases of violence as well as child marriage (Argentina); 121.139 Adopt a specific national action plan to combat the sexual exploitation of children that takes into account all forms of sexual exploitation (Zambia); 121.146 Approve a national action plan to combat the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents, including preventive measures that contribute to raising the visibility of the problem, and provide effective assistance to victims (Chile).

¹²<https://www.unicefusa.org/sites/default/files/NextGenMadagascar2020ProgressReport.pdf>

V. RIGHT TO HEALTH CARE

15. Once again, this stakeholders' coalition commends the government of Madagascar for accepting recommendations no. 121.84¹³, 121.86¹⁴, and 121.87¹⁵ to improve the right of access to health.

16. Madagascar faces a critical shortage of qualified medical personnel, especially pediatricians and nurses¹⁶. This lack of human resources is compounded by a shortage of essential medical supplies and medications, hindering the quality of care available for children¹⁷.

17. As a result of these challenges, Madagascar continues to grapple with high child mortality rates. Many children die from preventable diseases like malaria, pneumonia, and diarrhea due to a lack of timely access to proper diagnosis, treatment, and preventative measures.

18. This Stakeholders' coalition recommends the Government of Madagascar to:

- a) Move towards a system of universal healthcare, ensuring free or heavily subsidized healthcare access, especially for children.***
- b) Expand and improve healthcare facilities in remote areas to address the uneven distribution of healthcare services.***
- c) Increase training programs for doctors, nurses, and other healthcare professionals, with a focus on pediatrics.***
- d) Ensure adequate supplies of essential medications and medical equipment are available throughout the country.***
- e) Promote vaccination campaigns and public health education programs to prevent the spread of infectious diseases.***

VI. DIRECT VOICES FROM CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

19. The main themes presented in this report come from the voices of the children and young people. We understand that the elaboration of a report of a technical nature is not incompatible with the inclusion of direct voices in it. In our case, due to the nature and objectives of our coalition, the fundamental weight falls on children and young people in vulnerable societies.

¹³ 121.84 Further enhance activities aimed at giving effect to the right of access to health (Azerbaijan).

¹⁴ 121.86 Continue its efforts to fight malaria and other related infectious diseases (Islamic Republic of Iran).

¹⁵ 121.87 Support strategies aimed at developing the health sector and providing health care for all (Libya).

¹⁶ <https://www.unicef.org/madagascar/en/stories/madagascar-most-vulnerable-gain-access-health-care-through-community-health>

¹⁷ <https://www.unicef.org/madagascar/en/stories/madagascar-most-vulnerable-gain-access-health-care-through-community-health>

20. The work with children and young people revolved around two main questions. On the one hand **“What are the main rights needs you have in your daily life?”**; secondly, **“What would you ask of the Madagascar authorities for children your age (concrete and realistic)?”** These questions were formulated through an anonymous questionnaire addressed to children from the above-named schools and NGOs.

21. The most significant answers are summarized below:

1° question:

- a) Right of expression and support, right to be heard;
- b) Right to food and health;
- c) Right to a good environment and to be loved;
- d) Right to education;
- e) Rights to freedom;
- f) Right to a family.

2° question:

- a) More help for poor children;
- b) Special attention for young people in vocational guidance;
- c) Right to protection from violence, abuse, and exploitation;
- d) Right of equality;
- e) Access to a healthy and sufficient diet;
- f) Water access;
- g) Prioritization of health and education, especially in the South;
- h) Raising young people’s awareness of their rights;
- i) Access to the best education.

22. The UPR is an essential mechanism to encourage and support the promotion and protection of human rights in each country to make our voice heard on the situations to be improved regarding the gaps in implementing efforts to overcome socio-economic obstacles that particularly disturb the development of children.

23. This stakeholders’ coalition thanks the Government of Madagascar for its efforts to continue to listen to the voices of civil society, especially children and young people, and encourage it to continue to make its best efforts to improve the situation of rights in the country in all areas.