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18 YEARS OF CHILD RIGHTS
FMSI

The logo for FMSI, featuring a stylized globe with a red and white graphic element, enclosed within a circular frame.

FMSI: 18 years walking alongside children and communities

Angela Petenzi

Project Administration Officer

A story that keeps growing, with a simple dream: to make what is right become normal.

Eighteen years ago, in a small room in Rome, a document was signed before a notary. It seemed a formal act, but from that moment began a story that has crossed continents, schools, villages, emergencies, and lives: the story of **FMSI – the Marist International Solidarity Foundation**.

Since that day, the world has changed many times. FMSI has changed too—grown and renewed itself. But one thing has never changed: **the belief that every girl and every boy has the right to a safe childhood, to quality education, and to the opportunity to build their own future.**

Today, eighteen years after its creation, **FMSI celebrates a story built not only on numbers but on collaboration and community.** A story written together with educators, Marist Brothers, local partners, and donors who have believed in the power of solidarity.

Throughout these years, the Foundation has worked in contexts marked by war, migration, and poverty, **supporting schools, educational programs, and emergency initiatives** that have restored dignity and hope to thousands of children, young people, and families.

Not just solidarity, but genuine participation: every project has become a space for education and rights, where those in vulnerable situations have been able to make their voices heard.

Since 2011, with consultative status at the United Nations, FMSI has brought those voices to the

very places where policies are shaped. Through **advocacy work and the Universal Periodic Review (UPR)**, girls, boys, and adolescents have contributed to drafting recommendations for their governments.

A tangible sign of how participation can turn into real change: new laws, awareness campaigns, and a growing culture of shared human rights.

Every achievement is the result of **collective work**. FMSI never walks alone—it works in networks with Marist and secular organizations, journalists, institutions, and local communities. And it does so thanks to the constant support of donors who share the **same vision: a fairer world where every childhood can be fully lived.**

This journey is full of stories and faces. One of the dearest is that of **Br. Jude Pietersen**, a South African Marist Brother and former Director of FMSI, who during apartheid decided to open white-only schools to Black students. *“It was the normal thing to do”,* he said. *“If we live together, why should we study apart?”* That simple gesture continues to inspire FMSI: **to make what is right become normal.**

Eighteen years later, the Foundation looks ahead with the same energy as on its first day. With the strength of its experience and the conviction that every step, every encounter, and every project can help **build a future where rights are not a privilege—but an everyday reality.**

Happy birthday, FMSI.

Eighteen years of solidarity that continue to grow—together.



សាកលវិទ្យាល័យ
ព្រះស្រីរាជ្យ



Brother Ken, thank you

Dear Ken,

As you conclude your term as President of FMSI in October 2025, we write with deep gratitude for eight years of vision, courage, and patient guidance. This closing chapter of your service meaningfully coincides with a milestone for our Foundation: on 24 October, FMSI will mark 18 years of Solidarity and Child Rights. The date is significant: it is United Nations Day, commemorating the entry into force of the UN Charter on 24 October 1945—a moment to recall the UN's values of peace, cooperation, and respect for human rights. That our anniversary and your farewell converge on this date highlights the path you have helped trace for FMSI: a Marist foundation deeply engaged with the UN, steadfast in **child rights**, and firmly oriented to **Global Marist Solidarity**.

In these 8 years together, between **2018 and 2025**, FMSI **supported more than 300 Marist projects in over 40 countries**, mobilizing **over €10 million** in project funding. While our partnership base has expanded to **30+ funding partners worldwide** and **dozens of implementing allies** across every region, we have extended collaboration to the other congregations of the Marist Family, strengthening unity in service.

Your guidance has borne fruit in **concrete works** that continue to change lives. It would take several pages to list them all, but we certainly must mention the multiple projects sustained in **Bolivia, Nigeria, and Malawi; Emergency and recovery support in Syria, Lebanon, DRC and Haiti; new Marist schools** built in **Madagascar,**

Cameroon, Liberia, Ivory Coast, Ghana and East Timor; two hostels for girls in Bangladesh. Strategic interventions such as **New Horizons (2019–2023)** across **21 schools** in the Province of Southern Africa; ongoing, **concrete support** to both **Fratelli projects** (Lebanon & Colombia) and to the **LaValla School in Cambodia**.

We now have a new Kindergarten in **Mozambique**, and the first drinkable water plant in Maicao serving hundreds of kids.

You have insisted—by word and example—that **Solidarity and Child Rights must walk hand in hand**. Increasingly, our initiatives empower children with leadership skills and youth-led advocacy, **bridging grassroots efforts with UN policymaking** for greater impact. **You inspired us to stand with those without privilege and to give voice to those whose voices go unheard**, ensuring that dignity and participation are non-negotiable. Together with the **Secretariat of Solidarity-CMI and CCIG**, we have strengthened advocacy through UN mechanisms and made **child participation** a defining mark of our mission in all our UPR reports and oral statements.

Thanks to your emphasis on **Mission Capacity Development**, FMSI has intensified support for **governance, financial accountability, strategic planning, and project design**. Since **2022**, our **project management training has reached 400+ participants in 24 countries**. Capacity building remains a priority, with **continuous training** in child protection, financial accountability, and advocacy. Under your encouragement, FMSI has taken a **leading**

role in networking and events on child rights. Since 2023, 20 November has become a landmark date for the Institute, marked by global actions. We continue to collaborate with **BICE, Edmund Rice, La Salle Brothers, FOCSIV, and Child Rights Connect, and in 2023** FMSI joined the **New York NGO Forum**—expanding our presence and voice.

Emergency response has remained a core focus with dozens of emergency interventions and helping to manage the Global Marist Family Fund, allocating €134,283 to nine emergency projects in seven countries in 2024 and 40.000€ to 3 emergency projects in 2 countries in 2025. **Between 2020 and 2025, the Fund reached 58.317 beneficiaries, distributing 685.597,03 € across 53 projects in 30 countries.**

You consistently believed in continuous qualifying training for FMSI staff—investing in language proficiency and academic formation—so that our service would be ever more professional, credible, and effective.

Looking ahead, the **FMSI Strategic Plan 2026–2034**—presented to the Board in **December 2024**—builds on these achievements to advance child rights through **advocacy, fundraising, and technical support**. It reinforces our role in **developing strategic programs and training in project management**, while sustaining financial accountability, strategic planning, and budgeting as hallmarks of our service. Capacity building remains a priority, with **continuous training** in

child protection, financial accountability, and advocacy.

You have helped us lift our gaze: from projects to programs, from activities to impact, from goodwill to strategy. You have also helped us bend low: to listen, to accompany, and to learn—especially from children and young people who are not simply beneficiaries, but **protagonists of their own future**. And you have reminded us that our **Marist Charism is not a memory, but a living vision**—vital, contemporary, and urgently needed in a fractured world.

For this, and for much more that cannot be captured in a letter, **thank you**.

As we open the next chapter, we carry forward the legacy you leave with us: a clearer sense of purpose, a wider family of partners, and a deeper conviction that the Marist way of solidarity—**rooted in child rights, participation, and justice**—will continue to bear fruit.

Be assured that your example will keep inspiring us. We will not stop here—we will continue serving the Institute and all children with steady integrity, commitment, and enthusiasm. May the Good Mother accompany your journey.

With fraternal gratitude,

The Staff of FMSI





Building Inclusion in Times of Crisis: FMSI Field Visit to Lebanon

Eleonora Gastaldello
Finance & Office Administrator

In a Lebanon strained by overlapping economic and social crises, the Fratelli Project in Rmeileh—near Saida—continues to offer a safe, inclusive space for learning and growth. **Serving over 1,000 people, the program, led by the brothers of both the Marist and [La Salle](#) congregations, brings together Syrian, Palestinian, and Lebanese children in the same classroom, creating a shared learning environment that embraces diverse backgrounds.** Through play and colours, the program helps them overcome the challenges of their difficult circumstances.

From 2 to 5 October 2025, FMSI conducted a monitoring visit to assess delivery, gather evidence for upcoming donor engagements, and advance preparations for an oral statement amplifying children's voices in national policymaking. The team attended the centre's reopening after the summer break, observing strong participation in recreational and educational activities and engaging directly with children and adolescents.

During the visit, FMSI observed the project's evolution in terms of community life,

governance, and program development, taking into account the changing local dynamics. A focus was placed on infrastructure safety and safeguarding, with a walkthrough to identifying key upgrades, particularly in the children's recreational areas, to meet safety standards. Preparatory work also began for the children's oral statement to be presented at the United Nations session in January. Additionally, the team celebrated the appointment of Br. Juan Carlos as the new General Councillor, marking a moment of reflection on the project's achievements under his leadership and the exciting start of this new chapter.

In a community marked by displacement, unemployment, and shrinking services, Fratelli stands as a bridge—reducing learning loss, improving psychosocial well-being, and nurturing acceptance across lines of identity.

The visit reaffirmed that targeted, community-based interventions, backed by solid evidence and safeguarding standards, **can help children in vulnerable condition not only stay in school, but also belong, thrive, and lead.**

Madagascar: The Other Face of Paradise

Maria Rita Pala

Head of the Project and fundraising Unit

It is possible to fully grasp and understand certain socio-environmental situations only when you see them with your own eyes and can truly touch them with your hands. The static, cold screen of a computer — even if it allows me to stay connected constantly with the whole world — does not give the real, deep perception of other people's lives. Doing research, reading and producing data can **never be equated with actually meeting the children and schools behind those statistics.** This is what I tell myself every time I board a plane that takes me to the other side of the world.

And this is what I was telling myself even during the flight that took me from Rome to Antananarivo, the capital of Madagascar. **Despite the widespread and superficial idea people have of Madagascar — expanses of sand and crystal waters — the real face of the country is far from the perception Westerners have of it.** Away from the tourist attractions one becomes aware of how much that image is instrumentalized and how different it is from the reality and the lived experience of its inhabitants.

Madagascar is, in fact, one of the poorest nations in the world. Despite its productive potential, the socio-economic vulnerability of its people is constantly increasing: with GDP in

free fall for years now, repeated political crises, and natural and environmental disasters, the country is regressing in terms of development and improvement of living conditions.

This decline is confirmed by the value of the Human Development Index, which for 2023 was 0.487, a factor that places the country in the lowest category of the reference scale (177th out of 193 countries). Education in Madagascar represents an urgent and priority need since only one child out of three completes the Primary education cycle, resulting in about **97% of children around ten years old being unable to read and understand a text suitable for their age.** The low rates of enrollment and school retention are due to widespread poverty, early marriage (2 girls out of 5 marry before the age of 18), child labor (47% of children between 5 and 17 are employed in forms of labor exploitation), the student-teacher ratio of 46:1 (World Bank 2021) .

The low educational standard is partly caused, and certainly aggravated, by the poor educational level of the teaching staff, which shows a rate of 97% of teachers lacking a diploma or specific professional qualifications (UNICEF data). Violence against children is tragically widespread in the country: nine out of ten are victims of violent discipline.



Extreme poverty has given rise to a widespread phenomenon throughout the country, particularly in the South: transactional sex. This is an extremely common phenomenon: such an unfair sexual-economic exchange is favored by social structures of gender inequality; **girls are still forced to earn money to pay school fees or to support the family.** “Selling daughters is not just a metaphor, because in some regions there are still “women markets”. (Freedman, Rakotoarindrasata; Randrianasolorivo).

So I find myself in a place very different from my usual surroundings, immersed in a reality dramatically discordant. Comparison with people and situations here is difficult: you must empathize. To understand, it is necessary to assimilate, penetrate, and allow yourself to be filled with the sensations that these places, people, and situations evoke.

The stories we are told by local people are sad, touching, yet children and young people manage to transmit joy and love with their enthusiasm for the small things, for simple games made with recycled play materials, for the happiness of having us among them. They involve you with their spontaneous gestures, they overwhelm you. **What tires me more than anything else during my travels is not the**

flight, nor long layovers or endless car journeys to reach remote villages. **What disturbs me instead is feeling “in the wrong”** for representing, by virtue of my geographic origin, a world, the Western world, that the other half, the disinherited of the earth, imagines as the better one.

I feel the discomfort, while infinitely appreciating its content and intentions, of being at that moment the person who comes from afar, for whom the local community for days prepares an appropriate welcome, setting up welcome ceremonies and striving to obtain and create small gifts. **This is what touches the heart the most: knowing that in the midst of their complicated daily lives there is time and a way to think of other human beings by giving of the little that is possessed, sometimes only the warmth of a smile or a festive greeting dance.** And every time I wish I were the one on that stage, I wish I were the one putting them at the center of everything, just as I chose this work nine years ago.

I wish there were no ‘us’ who come from afar and a ‘them’ who wait. **I do the job I most desired to do, a choice I renew every morning with passion; yet, I wish to wake up one day in a world where my work is no longer necessary.**



At whatever latitude, we are part of the same community. Every man, every woman, every child on this planet, wherever they are born and live, has the right to life and dignity. The same rights we claim for ourselves belong also to all others. Without any exception. Let us remain human. Even when around us humanity seems to be lost.

VITTORIO ARRIGONI

FMSI fundraising visit in Germany and Holland: Strengthening ties, building capacity

Eleonora Gastaldello
Finance & Office Administrator

For years, FMSI has maintained direct contact not only with the communities it supports, thorough field visits and listening to local voices, but also with long-standing donors thorough a continue dialogue. **It is not only about fundraising but about advancing the mission of the Institute** and of FMSI to pursue children's rights and safeguarding, **nurturing relationships of trust and collaboration.** Thorough preparation and first-hand testimony from the sites visited made a real difference. The partners met expressed appreciation for FMSI's approach, describing it as concrete and impact oriented. During the meetings, FMSI set out its core mission and presented measurable results, aligning specific projects with each donor's geographic and thematic interests.

To give substance to the dialogue, FMSI proposed a focused portfolio:

- **Training 2025-2026:** a modular training pathway on the UPR and child rights to consolidate capacities within the Institute.
- **Renovation of the MIC in Kenya:** refurbishment of community spaces with child-safe standards, improvements to essential services (water, sanitation, energy), and the creation of inclusive learning environments.
- **Fratelli Maicao and Fratelli Lebanon:** school support initiatives for refugee children in two areas with high migratory flows.

At the heart of FMSI's vision is being "in support of the Marist Mission": not only financial assistance, but working side by side with partners to provide ongoing support and

develop local capacities, investing in processes of capacity building and empowerment. It is this infrastructure of skills – effective policies, protection mechanisms, monitoring and evaluation, responsible leadership – that makes interventions sustainable over time.

The outcomes are encouraging: most donors expressed strong interest in supporting FMSI's and the Institute's initiatives. Looking ahead, **FMSI will continue to share and promote the Institute's ongoing projects along with new, detailed proposals, ensuring full transparency in the use of funds and continuous technical accompaniment.** This commitment strengthens mutual accountability and makes donors feel part of the results.

Thus, once again this year, the visit was not only about fundraising: **it was an opportunity to consolidate alliances, align values, and map out shared trajectories.** When interests and objectives converge, partnerships between organizations and donors become a driver of change: they protect children's rights today and build capacities so that tomorrow communities can stand on their own.



Events & Campaigns

My voice, my right – November 20th, 2025

In a world facing growing challenges, the active participation of children has become more vital than ever. For the Institute, FMSI, and the Secretariat of Solidarity – CMI, November 20th, World Children's Rights Day, will continue to stand out as a key moment to uplift their voices and reaffirm this commitment.

This date will once again commemorate the adoption by the United Nations General Assembly of two pivotal documents: the Declaration of the Rights of the Child (1959) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989). As the Convention reaches its 36th anniversary, it will serve as a reminder that while most nations have ratified it, the journey toward full recognition and realization of children's rights will still require sustained efforts, cultural change, and deep collaboration.

In 2025, FMSI will also celebrate a significant milestone: **18 years of action, advocacy, and commitment to the rights of children and young people**. Since its founding in 2007, FMSI has worked tirelessly to amplify the voices of the most vulnerable and promote a culture of human rights within the Marist world and beyond.

As part of this celebration, FMSI and the Secretariat of Solidarity – CMI will renew their dedication to promoting children's rights, by organizing a series of events, campaigns, and international collaborations. November 20th will continue to be a key opportunity



to highlight the impact of this shared mission.

Over the years, FMSI has marked this day through diverse and meaningful initiatives. In 2025, the event will return with even greater participation. Building on the momentum of the [2024 edition](#), the initiative will gather more boys and girls from around the world, who will raise their voices and share their visions for a more just and inclusive future.

The event will take place on November 20th and will be livestreamed globally. Children and young people from countries will join sharing testimonies about their realities, challenges, and dreams.

The program will feature:

- **A keynote by young advocates encouraging youth participation;**
- **A participatory moment where children's voices will lead the conversation with those involved in building a better future for them.**

Thanks to increased collaboration with Marist Provinces and with grassroots partners, this event will continue to evolve as a powerful platform for collective reflection and action.

As FMSI celebrates **18 years of impact**, the Institute of the Marist Brothers will look to the future with renewed energy—committed to ensuring that the voices of boys and girls will not only be heard but will inspire the policies, decisions, and communities of tomorrow.

**Scan the QR
Code to regi-
ster for the
event!**



Peace Campaign – My Name is Childhood

On the International Day of Non-Violence, the Marist International Solidarity Foundation ETS (FMSI) and [SED – Solidaridad, Educación, Desarrollo](#) launch an open campaign for peace that places childhood and children's rights at the center of public attention: “**My Name is Childhood**”.

The initiative works on a symbolic level — **giving a name to each child** (real or fictional) and speaking through that name — **to show what it means to be a child in places where crises or war put their rights at risk**. This narrative approach reflects the Marist commitment to peace and the protection of children's rights.

Why this campaign?

With 56 countries in conflict — such as **Ukraine and Palestine, Yemen, Syria, Ethiopia, Somalia, Sudan, Myanmar, Afghanistan, Haiti, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Burkina Faso, Mali, Niger, and South Sudan** — severely affecting the lives of thousands of rights-holders, this campaign focuses especially on the most vulnerable population: children and young adolescents.

According to the [Convention on the Rights of the Child](#), their rights to life, survival, and development, to identity and family, to education and safe environments must prevail over war and guide policies, decisions, and communication.

A collective call

This campaign belongs to everyone. We invite the Marist family, NGOs, the international community, world leaders, and humanitarian organizations to join in a single voice and shared commitment.

What we ask for

- **An approach that prioritizes children's rights** in all crisis responses, with the dignity and best interests of the child as the primary consideration.
- **Unhindered humanitarian access** to ensure the protection of civilians.

- **Safe schools**, keeping educational spaces free from violence and ensuring safe access to learning.
- **Ethical communication**, in line with safeguarding standards, that does not expose minors to risk.

How you can join

You can participate by **using the campaign symbol and endorsing the statement**, supporting a shared demand: that children's rights are always put first.

Shared symbol and participation

The coalition presents a unifying emblem — a **dove carrying a kite** (childhood and peace) — to be used consistently in appeals and meetings (corner/logo watermark or background) and shared on websites and social media (avatars, headers, banners).

We invite everyone to adopt the participatory model “My Name is Childhood” to make visible, with a name and a location, where and how children's rights are at risk.



Advocacy

Children and Young People on the Frontline

Listening to 1.223 young voices in 12 countries through the UPR

This year, FMSI and the [Marist Secretariat of Solidarity – CMI](#) submitted twelve **Universal Periodic Review (UPR)** reports for Liberia, Malawi, Honduras, the United States, Lebanon, Rwanda, Australia, Mozambique, Belgium, the Solomon Islands, Singapore, and Paraguay — and **every single one was written with children and young people, not just about them.** In preparing these reports, we listened to and involved the voices of 1.223 children and young people from Africa to Oceania, from the Americas to Asia. **That simple choice changed everything:** the questions we asked, the stories we heard, and the recommendations we made.

From classrooms and community activities to after-school groups and one-on-one chats, **we created safe spaces where girls and boys could speak in their own words.** They told us what keeps them safe, what gets in their way, and what gives them hope. They pointed to the long bus rides and school fees that make education harder than it should be. They described bullying—on the playground and online. They spoke about documentation and the stress of exams, about the need for nutritious meals, safe play spaces, and teachers who have time to listen. They worried about climate and the future. They also spoke about **friendship, courage, and the small victories that carry them through.**

What makes these 12 reports different is **how they were made.** First, we invite children to speak freely about the problems they face and what would change in their country. Then we build the report around the priorities they name—grouping issues in their words, drawing on their examples, and turning them into clear recommendations. It's a conversation that reshapes the outcome.

Children don't need a bigger seat at the table—they need a real say in what's on it.

What we heard?

- **School must be accessible.** Fees, uniforms, transport, and distance are real barriers.
- **Safety is more than a locked gate.** It's protection from violence, bullying, exploitation, and online harm—and trusted adults who act when something's wrong.
- **Health and well-being matter.** Mental health support, inclusive classrooms, and dignified services for children with disabilities make a daily difference.
- **Paperwork is power.** Without proper documents, children fall through the cracks—unable to enroll in school, access services, or feel fully seen.
- **The environment is part of childhood.** Floods, heat, pollution, and degraded land are not abstract ideas; they shape whether a child learns, plays, or stays healthy.

When children are heard, policies get closer to the truth of daily life. Recommendations become practical, kinder, and harder to ignore. UPR is a formal UN process, but behind every paragraph there's a child walking further than they should to reach school, or a teenager wondering if their view counts. These 12 reports turn that lived reality into clear asks—so governments and institutions can act.

To the many students, teachers, parents, and Marist communities who made space for listening: **thank you.** You reminded us that participation is not a favor we grant—it's a right we uphold. Your time, your trust, and your honesty strengthened every page we submitted.

Be part of the next chapter: If you're a teacher, community leader, or partner who wants to bring children's voices into human-rights work, we'd love to collaborate.

Together, we can make sure the rooms where

decisions are made are rooms where children are heard.

FMSI and the Marist Secretariat of Solidarity – CMI remain committed to advocacy that starts with listening.



Youth for Peace & Human Rights

During the 60th Session of the United Nations Human Rights Council in Geneva, [IIMA](#) —on behalf of an NGO coalition that includes FMSI—contributed to the Biennial Panel on Youth and Human Rights.

The discussion highlighted the transformative role of young people in building peaceful, inclusive societies, while also confronting the barriers many still face, especially in contexts of poverty, conflict, displacement and discrimination. Our contribution placed young people not as recipients of decisions, but as **key actors** whose leadership, creativity and lived experience are essential to advancing human rights and sustainable peace.

In our statement, we asked a simple but urgent question: **“How can we achieve sustainable peace if we do not educate and empower youth to strive for it?”**

We underlined that quality education—and in particular human rights education—is a strategic investment. It equips young people to claim

their rights, challenge injustice, mediate conflict peacefully, and shape decisions that affect their lives and their communities. Education, in short, is the first step to **empowerment**.

What we called for:

- **Remove barriers to meaningful youth participation** in all decision-making spaces—from local councils to national and international forums.
- **Guarantee quality education and human rights education for all**, so that every young person has the knowledge and skills to act as a peacebuilder.
- **Systematically protect and advance youth rights across UN human rights** processes, ensuring consistent attention and follow-up.

Young people are not only the future; they are shaping the present.

Recognizing their rights and contributions is fundamental to building a more just and peaceful world for everyone.



Listening to the voices of Marist children from Kiribati, we stand for climate justice at the United Nations

FMSI and Secretariat of Solidarity – CMI

[Edmund Rice International \(ERI\)](#), FMSI – Marist International Solidarity Foundation, and the [Secretariat of Solidarity – CMI](#) of the Marist Brothers joined forces to deliver an **oral statement** on Kiribati during the adoption of the country's **Universal Periodic Review (UPR) at the 60th Session of the UN Human Rights Council**. The statement centers on the intertwined realities of climate change and overpopulation and their impact on the rights and dignity of the Kiribati people.

Crucially, the UPR submission and the oral statement were grounded in the voices of Marist children and young people in Kiribati, who shared first-hand concerns about how climate change is undermining their daily lives, future opportunities, and the continuity of their culture, language, and traditions. Through

facilitated listening sessions and ongoing engagement with schools and youth groups, their testimonies helped shape the priorities presented to the Council.

This reflects our commitment to child participation: placing children not only at the center of protection efforts, but also at the table where decisions are discussed.

The coalition welcomed Kiribati's constructive engagement with international partners to implement its Joint Implementation Plan for Climate Change and Disaster Risk Management 2019-2028, acknowledging the Government's efforts while underscoring **the urgency of measures that protect both people and culture**. The statement highlights the profound risk of territorial loss due to sea-level rise and

the attendant threat of an **“irreparable loss” of traditions, language, and identity—especially for children and young people who will inherit the consequences of today’s policy choices.**

The groups also drew attention to the human rights pressures created by climate-induced internal displacement, which pushes families from outer islands toward South Tarawa in search of services. The resulting population density strains housing, agriculture, health care and sanitation, and increases vulnerability to disease outbreaks—factors that compound socio-economic inequalities for the most vulnerable.

In welcoming the acceptance of several recommendations over these topics, the statement urges two concrete steps:

- **A joint UN-Kiribati Action Plan** on climate migration that safeguards cultural rights;
- **Investment to improve living conditions on**

outer islands—including innovative options such as **artificial land creation**—to reduce harmful over-concentration in Tarawa.

The appeal from ERI, FMSI and the Secretariat of Solidarity – CMI aligns with the broader UPR outcome for Kiribati. In this cycle, the country received a significant number of recommendations across areas such as climate action, food security, health and education—reflecting the international community’s recognition that **human rights and climate resilience are inseparable** for low-lying Pacific nations.

This intervention builds on the coalition’s prior advocacy with and for young people in Kiribati, documenting how environmental degradation, overcrowding, and limited services intersect with children’s rights and educational opportunity. The children’s perspectives informed both the written UPR submission and the oral statement delivered during the adoption of the outcome.



Fundraising

Let's support together the people affected by the conflict in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

The humanitarian crisis unfolding in the regions of the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) continues to exact a devastating toll on communities in situation of vulnerability. In particular, the cities have borne the brunt of the ongoing armed conflict, which has led to mass displacement, the collapse of local economies, food insecurity, the breakdown of healthcare infrastructure, and the widespread disruption of educational services.

The conflict has led to the **depletion of essential medical supplies.** Since the rebel groups took control on January 2025, stocks of essential medicines have been rapidly depleting. Additionally, health facilities have reported a surge in conflict-related sexual violence cases, with survivors requiring comprehensive medical and psychological support. **Children are particularly vulnerable in this crisis.** The displacement has disrupted education, with many schools closed or occupied by IDPs, leaving thousands of children without access to learning. The influx of IDPs has overwhelmed existing WASH facilities, leading to inadequate access to clean water

and sanitation. This situation heightens the risk of waterborne diseases, including cholera. The conflict has disrupted agricultural activities and local markets, leading to food shortages and increased prices. Both displaced and host communities are struggling to meet their basic food needs.

In response to this situation, the Marist Brothers of the Democratic Republic of Congo together with the East Central Africa Marist Province (PACE) and in collaboration with FMSI (Marist International Solidarity Foundation), have launched an emergency intervention aimed at supporting internally displaced persons (IDPs), families in situation of vulnerability, orphans, and those without the means to meet their most basic needs. This one-month initiative focuses on the distribution of essential food and hygiene kits to families, with a specific emphasis on restoring dignity and safeguarding the health and well-being of children, women, and the elderly.

Thanks to this generous support, we have already been able to assist some



families with food and hygiene kits, but many more families are still in urgent need of assistance.

The project addresses four critical challenges: **severe food insecurity** (exacerbated by conflict-related disruptions to agriculture and local markets); **lack of access to education** (which has left thousands of children out of school and at risk of exploitation and recruitment by armed groups); **fragile healthcare systems** (unable to respond to the rising number of waterborne diseases and conflict-related injuries); inadequate housing (with many families forced to live in makeshift shelters). The intervention is not only delivering immediate life-saving relief but also creating the foundations for long-term community recovery. Through inclusive decision-making and the active involvement of local leaders and stakeholders, the project strengthens community resilience and fosters a spirit of solidarity in the face of ongoing adversity.

To support this vital work, FMSI has launched a fundraising campaign thanks to the generosity of both Marist (including the contribution of the **Global Marist Family Fund**) and non-Marist donors. This support has been instrumental in expanding the reach and impact of the emergency assistance provided.

How can you help

Contributions to the campaign are still welcome and urgently needed. You can support our emergency efforts in the DRC by:

- Making a direct donation via FMSI official website;
- Sharing the campaign within your networks to help us reach more potential donors;
- Partnering with us as an organization to co-finance future phases of humanitarian response.

Your support can make a meaningful difference in the lives of those who are suffering. **Together, we can offer not just relief, but hope.**

As we respond to the urgent humanitarian needs in the DRC, **we as Marists do not forget the other crises unfolding around the world**—where children and the most vulnerable continue to bear the heaviest burden. Our hearts and prayers are with those suffering in Gaza, where the prolonged war continues to devastate communities and disrupt the lives of millions, especially children. We remember the crisis in Myanmar, where civil unrest has driven countless families into displacement. In Ukraine, ongoing conflict has left families shattered and infrastructure in ruins. In Cameroon, violence and instability have similarly led to mass displacements.

In all these places, the suffering of the innocent calls us to remain committed to our mission of compassion, justice, and solidarity.



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