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# First Presential Phase of Capacity-Building Training

From **12 to 14 January**, Accra, Ghana, hosted the **first presential phase** of the capacity-building training supported by [Misean Cara](#) and promoted within the framework of strengthening project management and safeguarding with a child-rights approach. The gathering brought together all members of the **African Mission Commission (AMC)** representing the five regions of Nigeria, Madagascar, West-Africa, Pace and Southern Africa, marking an important milestone in the regional formation process.

A central component of the training focused on **safeguarding according to Child Rights principles**, facilitated by **Br. Fortune Chakasara**. Through participatory sessions, practical examples, and reflective dialogue, participants deepened their understanding of child protection, prevention of harm, and the responsibility of Marist works to place the dignity and rights of children at the heart of all actions.

Beyond the immediate learning outcomes, it confirmed the readiness of the **AMC to reproduce the training through a cascade approach** across all its territories. This train-the-trainer dynamic will allow the competencies acquired in Accra to be progressively transferred to provinces and local works, ensuring sustainability and a broader institutional impact.

The next two online training sessions are set for **10th February** and **3rd March** at 15:00 Italian time.

From **15 January onwards**, the programme continued with **field visits to several projects in Accra and Kumasi**. These visits offered a concrete opportunity to witness the **support provided by FMSI to the Mission of West Africa**, reaching **thousands of children**, particularly those **most at risk of exclusion**. Education, social inclusion, and protection initiatives illustrated how a rights-based approach translates into tangible change in the lives of children and young people.

The visits also provided a valuable space for dialogue and forward-looking reflection on the **Youth Empowerment Clubs Network**. Particular focus was placed on the imminent opening of the first Youth Empowerment Club in Ghana, which will be established at **Our Good Mother School in Ashalaja**. This initiative marks an important step in strengthening youth participation, leadership, and empowerment within Marist educational contexts. At the same time, the **AMC is invited to reflect on how to create synergies** between the Youth Empowerment Clubs and other existing initiatives, such as [Champagnat Global](#), in order to enhance coherence and impact.

Overall, the Accra presential phase emerged as a meaningful moment of learning, consolidation, and renewed commitment to serve children and young people—especially the one in conditions of vulnerability— through professional, coordinated, and rights-based action.





# Advancing Solidarity: A Global Marist Commitment to Child Rights

The **Marist International Solidarity Foundation (FMSI)** has submitted **13 new Marist Projects of Solidarity**, reinforcing the Marist Institute's commitment to stand alongside children and communities living at the margins of society. Rooted in a multiannual, results-oriented approach, these initiatives focus on some of today's most complex and fragile contexts—**Madagascar, Maicao at the Colombia-Venezuela border, Chad, Nigeria, India, Cambodia**—especially in areas where poverty, displacement, exclusion, and weak protection systems intersect.

At the heart of every project is a clear priority: **placing human and child rights at the center of action**. The projects respond to the realities of children facing multiple forms of vulnerability, including **children with disabilities, migrant and displaced children**, children with no access to education and **children from ethnic minorities**. Beyond service delivery, each initiative is designed to strengthen dignity, participation, and long-term resilience—ensuring that solidarity translates into lasting change.

Most of the projects are implemented **within school settings**, recognizing schools as key spaces for protection, inclusion, and the promotion of child rights. In several African countries, this work is carried out in close collaboration with the **Secretariat of Education and Evangelization** through **Youth Empowerment Clubs**, which strengthen young people's participation, leadership, and human

rights awareness.

A defining feature of this new portfolio is its **strong advocacy component**. Alongside community-based action, all projects contribute evidence, voices, and lived experiences to advocacy efforts at national and international levels. Together with the Secretariat of Solidarity-CMI, FMSI amplifies these realities within **UN human rights mechanisms**, helping ensure that policies and recommendations reflect the daily lives of children at the peripheries and that duty-bearers are held accountable.

This work is made possible through long-standing partnerships. [Misean Cara](#) stands among the Marist Institute's strongest allies, having supported solidarity initiatives and emergency responses for **more than a decade**. This partnership, together with the Marist Brothers of Ireland, has been instrumental in enabling sustained, multi-year engagement—moving beyond short-term interventions toward measurable outcomes and systemic impact.

Together, these 13 projects reflect a shared vision: **solidarity that is strategic, rights-based, and transformative**. By combining grassroots action with powerful advocacy, and by treating children not only as beneficiaries but as **rights-holders and agents of change**, FMSI, the Marist Brothers institute and its partners continue to push for a world where the most excluded children are seen, heard, and protected—both on the ground and at the global decision-making table.



# Quality Education and Human Rights for Burmese Migrant Children

*FMSI field visit to Thailand – January 2026*

In January, the **Marist International Solidarity Foundation (FMSI)** carried out a **field visit in Thailand to the Marist Learning Centre (MLC)**, a project that accompanies more than 400 Burmese migrant children and adolescents living in the Samphran District. The visit offered a valuable opportunity to listen directly to children, educators, and community members, and **to better understand the complex realities shaping access to education and rights for families living in migration contexts.**

**All of the children supported by the project come from Myanmar**, a country marked by **prolonged political instability**, armed conflict, and human rights violations. According to the United Nations, approximately 3.6 million people have been displaced as a result of the ongoing crisis, forcing many families to seek safety across borders, including in Thailand.

However, displacement does not automatically translate into protection. In Thailand, many families live in conditions of legal insecurity, without formal documentation, limiting their freedom of movement and access to essential services.

**These structural barriers deeply affect children's daily lives.** Restricted mobility, fear of discrimination, and the risk of detention or arrest create an environment of uncertainty that directly impacts access to education, safety, and long-term opportunities—reinforcing cycles of exclusion that are entirely beyond children's control.

**The project responds to this reality** by creating an inclusive and protective learning environment where children are welcomed first and foremost as rights-holders. Education is understood not only as academic instruction, but as a pathway to dignity, stability, and belonging. Through child-centred and participatory learning activities, children strengthen their academic skills while developing self-confidence, critical thinking, and an understanding of their rights, grounded in their lived experiences.

Human rights education is integrated with care and responsibility. **Children are supported to explore concepts such as equality, protection, and mutual respect.** Educators accompany each child with a relational and strengths-based approach that recognises resilience, cultural identity, and personal potential. Creating a safe space—where children feel

heard, respected, and valued—is central to the project's methodology.

The learning centre also serves as a point of stability for families, becoming a trusted reference within the community. By ensuring continuity in education and reinforcing a sense of safety, **the project helps reduce the risks associated with social exclusion and marginalisation.**

In Thailand, the Marist Brothers are not officially recognised as a Congregation. Despite this, they continue to accompany children and families with commitment, ensuring that the right to education remains always accessible.

During the January visit, an **UPR workshop was facilitated by the Marist Brothers Diego Leonardo Zawadzky Zapata and Nnodu Chukwubueze Onwutalu** from the Secretariat of Solidarity – CMI of the Marist Institute. In this space, children were invited to share their perspectives on rights and the barriers they

face. They spoke about their wish to move freely beyond their immediate surroundings, to have access to regular documentation and legal recognition, and to be treated with the same dignity and respect as other children. Above all, they expressed a strong hope for a future with opportunities—free from fear, discrimination, and exclusion.

**Listening to these voices reinforced the importance of approaches that do not speak for children, but with them—recognising their agency, aspirations, and right to participate in shaping their own futures.**

By combining quality education with a rights-based and inclusive approach, the Marist Learning Centre contributes to strengthening protection, participation, and future opportunities for Burmese migrant children in Thailand—affirming a simple but powerful truth: when children's rights are protected, contexts of vulnerability can become spaces of hope.





# The Commitment to Youth Empowerment in SACC Bafut

Br. Wiykiynyuy Therence Banseka,  
*in Charge of Youth Empowerment, SACC Bafut*

Saint Albert Comprehensive College (SACC) Bafut, located in the North West Region of Cameroon and owned by the Marist Brothers, has made youth empowerment one of its major priorities for this academic year. This commitment aims to equip students with the leadership skills, knowledge, and opportunities they need to become active participants in building a better world.

Since the beginning of the academic year three weeks ago, the school administration has already organized two sessions with students on leadership. These workshops have focused on essential aspects of leadership formation, including decision-making, servant and prophetic leadership, creativity and innovation, and fostering respect for fellow students and staff. Students are encouraged to lead in the *Marist way*; with humility, compassion, and a spirit of service.

One of the key components of the youth empowerment program at SACC Bafut is the formation of clubs, which provide practical

platforms for personal growth and community engagement. Among these, the **Music Club** stands out as a vital initiative offering psychosocial support through music therapy, especially for students affected by the ongoing sociopolitical situation in the region. Through music and creative expression, many students have found healing, comfort, and renewed hope, promoting mental wellness within the school community.

This inspiring initiative is made possible through the support of **FMSI Marista**, whose advocacy, funding, and promotion of children's rights have been instrumental in advancing youth empowerment at SACC Bafut. Their commitment to protecting and uplifting young people, particularly those in need, continues to bear meaningful fruit in the lives of our students.

As a Marist school community, we remain deeply grateful for this partnership and reaffirm our dedication to forming young people who are responsible, compassionate, and ready to shape a more just and peaceful world.



# Events & Campaigns

## 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,



# Advocacy

## 51st Session of the UPR Working

From **19 to 30 January 2026**, the 51st Session of the **Universal Periodic Review (UPR)** Working Group will take place in Geneva. During this session, UN Member States will review national human rights records and issue recommendations to strengthen the protection of human rights worldwide..

Countries under review during this session include Australia, Austria, Georgia, Lebanon, Mauritania, Micronesia, Nauru, Nepal, Oman, Rwanda, Saint Kitts and Nevis, Saint Lucia, and São Tomé and Príncipe.

As FMSI, together with the and the Secretariat of Solidarity - CMI , youth and children, we actively contributed to the drafting of the UPR submissions for **Australia**, **Lebanon**, and **Rwanda**. For these countries, we also took part in the **EU pre-sessions**, bringing to the international arena the recommendations and voices of children, collected through our projects and child participation processes. Ensuring that children's perspectives are heard at the highest international level is a key part of our commitment to a **child-rights-based approach** and meaningful participation.

### Lebanon

Children and young people involved in the [Fratelli Project](#) raised serious concerns in our UPR submission on children's rights – particularly around education, child labour, access to documentation, and basic needs.

During the European Union pre-session, they strongly emphasised the need to ensure that every child – regardless of nationality, socio-economic status or legal background – has access to primary and secondary education. As highlighted in our report, many children in Lebanon still face major barriers linked to poverty, displacement, school fees, transportation costs

and the deterioration of public education. In their own words:

**"We want real education, not just a place to sit."**

Guaranteeing universal access to quality education is essential to preventing school dropout, child labour and long-term exclusion. Children also called on Lebanon to provide identification documents to all children, including refugee, migrant and undocumented children, so they can access education, healthcare and essential public services.

**"Some of us don't even have legal papers... we can't register for school or move freely."**

Finally, they urged the State to recognise and uphold the intrinsic dignity and value of every child, regardless of social status, religion, education or legal situation. In a context of deep social fragmentation, children repeatedly asked to have their abilities, voices and potential acknowledged.

We hope Lebanon will take meaningful steps forward on these key issues.

Read our [UPR report](#)





## Rwanda

During the European Union pre-session, children and young people in Rwanda clearly expressed that **education is not only a fundamental right, but a pathway to dignity, empowerment and future opportunities**. As one student told us:

**“Every student, regardless of background, deserves equal access to quality learning so they can reach their full potential.”**

Children highlighted the importance of ensuring **equitable access to quality primary and secondary education for all**, including those affected by poverty, disability or displacement. They also stressed the need to **strengthen inclusive education systems**, through better learning materials, digital access, teacher training and safer, more supportive school environments.

Persistent challenges such as high repetition rates and low completion levels were raised as obstacles that risk undermining children's long-term prospects if not addressed through targeted national strategies.

Young people also strongly emphasised that child protection is essential to their well-being and development. One student shared:

**“Every child deserves care, safety, and a peaceful environment... When children are protected, they develop confidence and joy.”**

They called for continued investment in **child**

**protection systems**, including adequately funded services, trained professionals and strong community-based mechanisms. **Mental health and psychosocial support** for children and adolescents emerged as a key priority, alongside the promotion of **safe and non-violent environments** in schools and communities.

Across all discussions, children made it clear that **education and protection are deeply interconnected**. When children feel safe, they are able to learn; and when they learn, they are better equipped to grow, participate and thrive.

These priorities echo the broader concerns raised in our UPR submission, including **youth development and opportunities, children's overall well-being, and the need for infrastructure and development that truly respond to children's rights**.

As Rwanda approaches its UPR review, we extend our best wishes for a constructive and successful process. We hope this review will translate into renewed commitment and concrete action **to ensure that every child in Rwanda can learn safely, grow with dignity, and look to the future with hope**.

Read our [UPR report](#)



## Australia

Children and young people involved in our Marist school and social works raised key concerns in our UPR submission on children's rights in Australia, particularly in relation to **youth crime, child protection, and the situation of refugee and asylum-seeking children**.

While overall youth offending has declined, **recidivism rates remain alarmingly high**. This points to systemic shortcomings in rehabilitation, detention conditions and long-term reintegration support. Young people themselves highlighted the need for **justice responses that are centred on care, healing and accountability, rather than punishment alone**.

**Raising the age of criminal responsibility** and strengthening **trauma-informed mental health and psychosocial support** are essential steps to ensure that youth justice systems respond to children in line with their rights and developmental needs. Children also stressed the importance of consistent, **long-term accompaniment after release**, including mentoring and social-worker-based support to help young people reconnect with education, employment and community life. Without these pathways, many adolescents risk being trapped

in cycles of reoffending and exclusion.

At the same time, children and young people from refugee and asylum-seeking backgrounds drew attention to persistent barriers to education, financial stability and long-term integration. Prolonged uncertainty linked to temporary visa regimes continues to affect children's wellbeing, learning outcomes and future opportunities. Targeted educational support, alongside transition programmes focused on financial literacy and employment readiness, were identified as crucial to helping families move towards independence and stable housing.

At the heart of their message is a clear call: **children must be protected, supported and empowered – never left behind because of their background or legal status**

Read our [UPR report](#)



# 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.**



Scan or click the QR code to support the Democratic Republic of the Congo

# My Name is Childhood - Booklet

## Focus on the Situation of Children's Rights in the Democratic Republic of the Congo

### Introduction

Over the past few years, the Democratic Republic of the Congo has experienced progress in the promotion and protection of human rights. This change of paradigm coincides with the promulgation of the new Constitution of 18 February 2006. In this Constitution, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, for the first time, provided a definition of the child in Article 41, paragraph 1, which states the following: **"A minor child is any person, without distinction of sex, who has not yet reached the age of 18 years."** We also acknowledge institutional progress through the creation and strengthening of public structures responsible for the promotion and protection of human rights, such as the Ministry of Human Rights and the National Council for the Child (CNEN), which are major assets that have contributed. In addition, there is a legal framework for the protection of children's rights, notably the promulgation of Law 09/001 of 10 January 2009, which brings together in a single text all legal provisions concerning the child and adapts them to international standards.

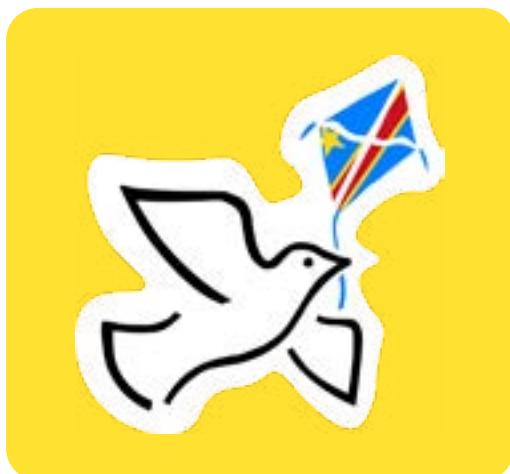
On the other hand, serious situations persist in the DRC due to the proliferation of the phenomenon of street children, children who

accompany adults to solicit help.

Some large families struggle to take care of their children, as the number of children per family varies between 4 and 8 children.

This work is designed within a purely internal framework for a peace education campaign. It first sets out the context and the challenges of our Democratic Republic of the Congo with regard to the situation of human rights for children (girls and boys); it then presents a general overview of the situation of children facing the resurgence of armed conflict in the DRC; the realities for children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo: continuous violence, a state of perpetual distress, a glimmer of hope; the obligations of the DRC towards children; structural programmes in perspective: Reception, Support, Rehabilitation and Reintegration; the expected solutions in the DRC in terms of Prevention, Verification, Demobilization and Assistance.

A series of recommendations will be formulated before providing a synthesis of this small advocacy work for human rights for children in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.



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