

## MITMUNC 2012 Position Paper

### **Reactivating Educational Systems in Post-Disaster Situations**

Providing a thorough and high-quality education to all children, especially those who inhabit developing countries, is essential to economic and social growth; global communication; the preservation of endangered cultures and languages; the promotion of safe and tolerant lifestyles; and the eradication of racial, social, and gender-based prejudice. Unfortunately, despite the instability and ineffectiveness of educational systems in third-world countries due to conflict, natural disasters, and poverty, the reactivation of educational systems in post-disaster situations is not being treated with the attention it deserves. This issue is especially relevant in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DR Congo), whose schools are threatened by droughts, flooding, and several active volcanoes, including Nyamuragira, which erupted in 2010 and is Africa's most active volcano. Along with natural disasters, extreme poverty – 71% of Congo's population lives below the poverty line – has hindered the success of our educational system and resulted in DR Congo's rather low total literacy rate of 67.2%. Gender issues are immediately apparent when one notes that the literacy rate is 80.9% among Congolese males but only 54.1% among females. In addition, approximately 140 killings of education aid workers occurred last year in DR Congo.

The inability of poverty-stricken nations to afford adequate scholastic supplies, the destruction of school buildings by natural disasters such as the earthquake in Haiti, the difficulty in establishing stable educational systems, gender inequality, and a global dearth of qualified teachers are all contributing factors to the abandonment of education in crisis situations. All of these factors must be addressed in order to resolve this issue. DR Congo believes that monetary incentive should be given to parents who send their children, especially their daughters, to school year-round; this would be particularly effective in rural areas, where financial support could help to compensate for the inability of the children to work during the planting season. Also, technical schools that would teach their students to rebuild school facilities destroyed by natural disasters would teach useful manual skills while raising literacy rates and providing safe environments in which future generations of students can be taught. The committee should suggest to NGOs that they intensify their efforts to provide books, writing supplies, and other essential scholastic equipment to struggling countries; however, we must impress upon the governments and educators of the world that, even without the aid of textbooks and schoolrooms, all children must be taught.

### **Preserving Endangered Cultures and Languages**

The preservation of endangered cultures and languages is another issue that must be addressed by UNESCO. Around 2474 of the world's 6000 languages are currently considered endangered; many of these endangered languages, long spoken in rural areas of Africa, Asia, and South America, are not spoken by the younger generations and will die along with the elders who speak them. Knowledge of ancient languages and cultures is essential to the appreciation and understanding of our ancestors' traditions, literature, and art. If UNESCO allows these languages and cultures to die out, we will deprive future generations of a staggering amount of rich and diverse cultural knowledge. In Congo, Africa's third largest country and a global hotspot of cultural diversity, Beeke, Dongo-Ko, Kazibati, Li-Ngbee, and Ngbinda, all former Congolese languages, are already considered either seriously endangered or moribund by UNESCO; they will be forgotten if this committee does nothing to preserve them.

It should be mandatory for students to be taught at least one endangered language in school, which would simultaneously spark interest in education and help to preserve dying languages. Textbooks and classic literature should be translated into endangered languages and read both at school and at home; educators should promote the idea that Dongo-Ko, for instance, is as culturally valuable a language to speak as Latin or Ancient Greek. Finally, we believe that establishing museums, websites, and national foundations dedicated to the

promotion and preservation of endangered languages and cultures would help to communicate the issue of endangered languages to the global community. DR Congo is convinced that the reactivation of educational systems in post-disaster areas and the preservation of endangered languages and cultures are of utmost importance and looks forward to working with the rest of the committee to resolve these issues.