



**Submission by Edmund Rice International
to the
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Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of DOMINICA
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1. Edmund Rice International (ERI), established in 2007, is a faith-based Non-government Organisation (NGO), in special consultative status with ECOSOC. Representing a network promoting and protecting human rights in 33 countries, ERI has offices in Geneva and New York. Priority issues for ERI are: the Rights of the Child, the Universal Right to Education, and Ecological Sustainability.

Introduction

2. The government of Dominica has accepted 51 (84%) of the 61 recommendations received in the first cycle of the UPR, in December 2009, but much remains to be done to protect and promote the rights of children in Dominica.

3. The information in this report is based on observations and field experience of educators and administrators in various parts of Dominica, as well as recent reports. It reviews the implementation of the recommendations accepted in 2009, and then provides further evidence for issues impacting on the rights of children in Dominica.

1. The Rights of the Child in Dominica

4. Ten (10) recommendations accepted by Dominica in the first cycle of the UPR (December 2009) concerned the rights of the child. They included action on trafficking of children (rec.70.1), promoting children's rights (recs.70.13, 70.14, 70.16), discrimination against children (rec.70.27), child abuse (rec.70.35), juvenile justice (recs.70.37, 70.39), health of young people (rec.70.43), and education of disadvantaged children (rec.70.49). In addition there were five recommendations accepted on the right to education (recs.70.20, 70.44, 70.47, 70.49, 70.50), with direct applicability to children.

5. Yet recent evidence suggests that many of these recommendations have not been fully implemented, and the rights of the child in Dominica are still routinely violated. Dominica has various mechanisms to consult with children and young people, notably the National Youth Council, its General Assembly and district youth groups, but poverty, youth

unemployment and violence against children¹ make it hard for many young people to participate in such mechanisms.

Recommendation

That the Government of Dominica:

- 1.1 **Develop and support consultative mechanisms, including the existing ones, whereby children and young people can communicate to the government their concerns and suggestions concerning their rights and how to better promote and protect them.**

2. Right of the Child to a Family of Origin

6. Recent community intervention programmes by UN Women in Dominica² have highlighted high rates of gender-based violence and fatherless families. Local reports³ suggest fatherless families are the majority in some social groups. An earlier Caribbean Development Bank report⁴ identified a pattern of male absence (overseas work, flight, crime, alcohol, drugs, violence) and female resilience (local employment, child-rearing, domestic duties) amongst very poor families, with less than half having two resident parents. The CDB 2010 report on poverty found ‘men prefer to remain in visiting relationships’.⁵

7. With 29% of Dominica’s population below the poverty line (2009 estimate) and an overall unemployment rate of 23%⁶, poverty impacts on the exercise of many human rights, including in this case the right of children to a family of origin

Recommendation

That the Government of Dominica:

- 2.1 **Implement a Poverty Eradication Programme targetting women, children and those in vulnerable groups and protecting their right to social protection.**
- 2.2 **Incorporate gender equality issues in the school curriculum.**
- 2.2 **Establish and support programmes that train children and young people to analyse and change traditional and cultural stereotypes about gender roles.**

¹ Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) 2010 *Country Poverty Assessment Dominica: final report*. CDB, Barbados, xvi.

² <http://www.unwomen.org/en/news/stories/2012/11/in-dominica-a-violence-prevention-programme-helps-boys-overcome-gender-stereotypes/> Accessed Sep 5, 2013.

³ ERI Field Report 2013 *The Rights of the Child in Dominica*. ERI, Geneva (unpublished).

⁴ Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) 2004 *Country Poverty Assessment: final report*. Halcrow Group Ltd, London.

⁵ CDB 2010, xvi.

⁶ CDB 2010, xv.

3. Right of the Child to Education

8. In the first cycle of the UPR in 2009, Dominica accepted five recommendations on the right to education, all with direct applicability to children. They included full implementation of human rights education (rec.70.20), easier access to education for all (recs.70.44, 70.47), providing quality education especially for disadvantaged children (rec.70.49), and promoting education without discrimination (rec.70.50).

9. The Education Development Plan of the Dominican government proposes universal secondary education as a national policy⁷. The OECS Education Sector Strategy 2012 - 2021⁸ sees universal primary and secondary education as ‘almost universal’ in member states, including Dominica. 88% attendance is the figure given by the 2010 CDB report⁹ on poverty in Dominica. The OECS strategy also sees ‘increasing inequality’ and ‘gender disparities’ emerging in Dominican education outcomes¹⁰. Local NGOs¹¹ report poor attendance in some groups and a lack of opportunities for technical and vocational education.

Recommendation

That the Government of Dominica:

- 3.1 Provide adequate vocational and technical education opportunities at the secondary level, with a focus on local employment needs.**
- 3.2 Ensure the education system monitors school attendance and develops programmes to increase attendance rates, to achieve universal primary and secondary education outcomes.**

4. Right to Education for Children with Disabilities

10 There were two recommendations in 2009 which Dominica accepted concerning children with disabilities (recs.70.27, 70.28) and one concerning employment of persons with disabilities (rec.70.40)¹². Yet a local NGO¹³ in 2012 called for a survey to determine how many children with disabilities there were in Dominica, and announced the first respite centre for children with serious disabilities was still under construction. While earlier reports¹⁴ praised the centre in Roseau (run by an NGO) for children with developmental disabilities and the government school in Roseau for children with severe hearing loss, they also said

⁷ Joseph, F 2003 *Dominica NGO Report on the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in Dominica*. Christian Children’s Fund, Roseau.

⁸ Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) 2012 *Every Learner Succeeds: Education Sector Strategy 2012 – 2021*. OECS, Barbados, v.

⁹ Caribbean Development Bank (CDB) 2010 *Country Poverty Assessment Dominica: final report*. CDB, Barbados.

¹⁰ CDB 2010, v.

¹¹ ERI 2013 *Field Report* (unpublished), p.2.

¹² A/HRC/13/12, pp 14 – 15.

¹³ *Dominica News Online* Monday, December 3rd, 2012.

<http://dominicanewsonline.com/news/homepage/news/educationyouth/organization-wants-more-attention-for-children-living-with-disabilities/> [accessed on Sep 6, 2013].

¹⁴ ERI 2013 *Field Report* (unpublished), p.2.

there was no provision of education services for children with sight impairment. A 2013 article¹⁵ confirms that situation today.

Recommendation

That the Government of Dominica:

- 4.1 **Provide an inclusive education for all children with disabilities, including specialised centres for assessment and support, as needed.**

5. Right of the Child to Protection from Violence, Abuse and Exploitation

11. There were at least three recommendations accepted by Dominica in 2009 that would have strengthened child protection measures if implemented (recs.70.35, 70.39 and 70.43)¹⁶. But a 2013 report¹⁷ lists domestic violence against women and children as ‘the most serious human rights problem’ in Dominica. Abuse and violence in the home has also been identified¹⁸ as a major factor in discipline problems children face in schools. The CDB 2010 report on poverty in Dominica states: ‘It could be argued that the abuse of teenage and adolescent girls is almost institutionalised’¹⁹.

Recommendation

That the Government of Dominica:

- 5.1 **Invite the Special Rapporteur (violence against women, its causes and consequences) to visit Dominica.**
- 5.2 **Develop, in consultation with children and young people, a comprehensive child protection policy and national plan of action, including training for relevant personnel, a public education campaign on Child Protection, and an adequate number of Child Protection Units in major centres.**

¹⁵ *Dominica News Online* May 3, 2013. <http://dominicanewsonline.com/news/homepage/news/dr-shillingford-ricketts-on-blind-awareness-month/> [accessed Sep 6, 2013]

¹⁶ A/HRC/13/12, p.15.

¹⁷ United States Department of State, *2012 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices - Dominica*, 19 April 2013, available at: <http://www.refworld.org/docid/517e6e4260.html> [accessed 5 September 2013]

¹⁸ OECS Education Reform Unit 2006 *Comprehensive Study of School Discipline Issues in the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS): research report summary*. OECS, Barbados, p. 28

¹⁹ CDB 2010, p.171.