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UNICEF hails new law on rights for indigenous children in Republic of Congo



Indigenous Baka children in the Republic of Congo often do not go to school because of discrimination

31 December 2010 – The United Nations Children’s Fund ([UNICEF](#)) today hailed a new law granting children in the Republic of Congo belonging to indigenous populations a legal basis to access health, education and protection.

“This law is unique in the region and sets an example for all other countries having indigenous populations similar to the ones in Congo,” [said](#) Marianne Flach, UNICEF Country Representative in Congo.

“This is a great step forward for the children of the Congo, and represents a milestone in Congolese history,” she said of the law protecting and promoting the rights of indigenous populations, which was adopted by the country’s Senate after being ratified by the National Assembly.

Congo is a party to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, which articulates a set of universal children’s rights including the right to an identity, a name and a nationality, the right to an education, and rights to the highest possible standards of health and protection from abuse and exploitation.

It is also one of the poorest countries in the world, according to UNICEF. In addition, indigenous populations are “precariously balanced on the bottom rung of the society, the poorest of the poor,” the agency noted in a news release.

A vast majority of the country’s indigenous peoples live under the poverty line, 50 per cent of the children have no birth certificate, and one out five children dies before reaching the age of five – compared to one in eight among the rest of the population.

Further, 40 per cent of children belonging to indigenous populations suffer chronic malnourishment and 75 per cent of young people lack any schooling.

Ms. Flach stressed the need to make sure that the law is now put into practice. “This is the only way to ensure this law becomes a reality for the most vulnerable in the Congo.”

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