

## **EDUCATION - LITERACY**

### **III. CONCLUDING OBSERVATIONS**

#### **CERD**

- Guatemala, CERD, A/50/18 (1995) 58 at para. 311.

Particular concern is expressed that the rate of illiteracy is especially high among indigenous communities.

- Bolivia, CERD, A/51/18 (1996) 41 at para. 269.

The high rate of illiteracy and the fact that the national language, Spanish, is spoken by only 44 per cent of the population, and the large number of languages and dialects spoken in the country, are noted with concern, as they make communication difficult between the various ethnic groups and, in many cases, place indigenous persons at a disadvantage in the defence of their human rights.

- Venezuela, CERD, A/51/18 (1996) 65 at para. 475.

Further efforts should be made to strengthen the system of bilingual education in order to cover the whole of the indigenous population, 40 per cent of which remains illiterate, and to prevent the destruction of the indigenous cultural heritage.

- Peru, CERD, A/54/18 (1999) 21 at para. 154.

It is noted that the indigenous population, the members of which often have no identity papers and are illiterate, is thus deprived of the possibility of exercising its civic and political rights.

#### **ICCPR**

- Guatemala, ICCPR, A/51/40 vol. I (1996) 33 at para. 221.

It is noted that social and economic disparities are all-pervasive in the country. High levels of poverty and illiteracy, lack of opportunities, and discrimination against the indigenous population, women and the poor contribute to widespread violations of human rights.

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- Colombia, ICCPR, A/52/40 vol. I (1997) 44 at para. 307.

The Government is urged to take appropriate measures to reduce the illiteracy rate among members of indigenous populations and black minorities.

- Morocco, ICCPR, A/55/40 vol. I (2000) 24 at para. 98.

A high rate of female illiteracy underlines the lack of equal opportunity for women in all aspects of society. Efforts should be intensified to overcome illiteracy, lack of education and all forms of discrimination against women. Guarantees of women's equality that extend only to political rights are not sufficient.

- Cameroon, ICCPR, A/55/40 vol. I (2000) 36 at para. 195.

A high rate of illiteracy among women, unequal educational and employment opportunities for women and the ability of husbands to seek a court order to prevent wives from engaging in certain occupations are of concern.

## **ICESCR**

- Panama, ICESCR, E/1992/23 (1991) 24 at para. 136.

It is noted that the indigenous peoples are among the most disadvantaged in society and that the rate of illiteracy among them is quite high, despite the provisions for compulsory education. In this regard, note is taken of the fact that the indigenous population live on reservations, often in remote areas, and are determined to maintain their traditions, customs and laws.

- Australia, ICESCR, E/1994/23 (1993) 36 at para. 150.

The situation of disadvantaged groups in the educational system is of particular concern. The situation of the Aboriginals and Torres Strait Islanders in education, which affects their prospects for future employment, as well as the problems of illiteracy among the adults of this group, the majority of whom did not have primary and secondary education, is noted.

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- Senegal, ICESCR, E/1994/23 (1993) 51 at para. 260.

The significantly lower literacy rates for women as well as certain cultural practices seriously compromise their opportunities for employment and advancement and is of particular concern.

- Iraq, ICESCR, E/1995/22 (1994) 32 at paras. 133 and 141.

### *Paragraph 133*

The fundamental importance of according equal priority to the education of women, including with regard to the eradication of illiteracy, is emphasized.

### *Paragraph 141*

The necessary measures should be adopted to accord greater priority to the education of women, including the eradication of female illiteracy.

- The Gambia, ICESCR, E/1995/22 (1994) 42 at para. 203.

Concern is expressed not only about the high rates of illiteracy but also the gender disparities apparent in the figures: the latest UNICEF data reports that over 75 per cent of adults between the ages of 15 and 54 are functionally illiterate and that 90 per cent of the total are women. The same data source reports that women are disadvantaged educationally, with females comprising only one third of primary school students and only one fourth of high school students.

- Mali, ICESCR, E/1995/22 (1994) 64 at paras. 344 and 352.

### *Paragraph 344*

According to a recent United Nations report, females in Mali receive only 29 per cent as much schooling as males. The adult literacy rate among women is half that of men.

### *Paragraph 352*

Concern is expressed over the high rate of illiteracy (adult illiteracy averaged 68 per cent: males 59 per cent, females 76.1 per cent) in Mali. Further concern is expressed over the fact that Mali has shown only modest progress in terms of educational standards over the past 20 years and has actually been regressing over the past 10 years. Formal primary schooling still does not appear to meet the needs of the population despite efforts by the Government. The rate of school enrolment in Mali is among the lowest in the world. Enrolment in primary schools included only 15 per cent of children in the relevant age group (males 17 per cent, females 14 per cent); secondary enrolment is equivalent to only 7 per cent of children in the appropriate age group (males 10 per cent, females 5 per cent).

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- Spain, ICESCR, E/1997/22 (1996) 27 at paras. 103 and 110.

### *Paragraph 103*

The persistence of a worrisome rate of illiteracy, especially among women and in certain southern regions, is noted.

### *Paragraph 110*

All necessary steps should be taken to reduce the level of illiteracy, which particularly affects women and certain population groups living in particular parts of the country.

- Guatemala, ICESCR, E/1997/22 (1996) 29 at paras. 135 and 145.

### *Paragraph 135*

The persisting problems of illiteracy and lack of access to education as they affect the poorest sectors of the population are of particular concern.

### *Paragraph 145*

There is an urgent need to undertake further measures to tackle the problem of illiteracy.

- El Salvador, ICESCR, E/1997/22 (1996) 34 at para. 180.

The education system should continue to be reformed in order to make primary education available to all and to reduce illiteracy. Measures should be taken by the authorities to enable working children to receive an adequate education.

- Peru, ICESCR, E/1998/22 (1997) 33 at para. 166.

The Government should increase its investment in education. In this respect, the State party's obligation to ensure compulsory and free primary education to all children, with a view to reducing the illiteracy rate, is recalled.

- Saint Vincent and The Grenadines, ICESCR, E/1998/22 (1996) 72 at para. 435.

The lack of literacy programmes for adults is of concern.

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- Canada, ICESCR, E/1999/22 (1998) 63 at paras. 413 and 431.

### *Paragraph 413*

It is of concern that 20 per cent of the adult population in Canada is functionally illiterate.

### *Paragraph 431*

The federal, provincial and territorial governments are to give even higher priority to measures to reduce the rate of functional illiteracy in Canada.

### *See also:*

- Italy, ICESCR, E/2001/22 (2000) 34 at para. 124.

- Ireland, ICESCR, E/2000/22 (1999) 33 at para. 138.

The high rate of illiteracy at various levels of society, especially among adults, youth, poor children, children of the traveller community and those in rural areas, is of concern.

- Tunisia, ICESCR, E/2000/22 (1999) 36 at para. 169.

With respect to articles 3 and 13 of the Covenant, it is noted that illiteracy still affects one third of the population, 42 per cent of women and 23 per cent of men, and that serious disparities continue to exist between the literacy rates of boys and girls at all age levels and between urban and rural areas. The serious problem of school drop-out, and especially that half of those enrolled in primary schools do not continue with secondary education, is noted. Of concern are students who drop out at the end of the first cycle of basic education, of whom 90 per cent had “exhausted their right to retake courses”. The discrepancy between the age fixed in law for the completion of mandatory education, which is 16 years, and the minimum age for employment, which is 15 years for the manufacturing sector and 13 years for the agricultural sector, is of concern. This discrepancy might encourage adolescents to drop out of secondary school.

- Solomon Islands, ICESCR, E/2000/22 (1999) 40 at para. 206.

The absence of compulsory primary education in the State party is of concern, with merely 60 per cent of school age children having access to primary education. Attention is drawn to the obligations under articles 13, paragraph 2 (a) and 14 of the Covenant, which stipulate that primary education shall be compulsory and free of charge, and to General Comment No. 11 (1999) concerning plans of action for primary education (art. 14 of the Covenant). In particular, concern is expressed about the

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low literacy rate among adults, and especially among women. Adult literacy is estimated to be as low as 23 per cent, which is to a high degree attributable to the lack of financial resources for education.

- Cameroon, ICESCR, E/2000/22 (1999) 56 at para. 343.

The high level of illiteracy still existing in the State party is of concern, as is the cultural preference given to the education of male children. This is reflected in the higher illiteracy rate of women, which is 49.9 per cent compared with 30 per cent for men.

- Egypt, ICESCR, E/2001/22 (2000) 38 at paras. 166 and 182.

### *Paragraph 166*

It is noted with concern that despite the achievements of Egypt in the field of education, inequality of access to education between boys and girls, high drop-out rates for boys and high illiteracy rates among adults, particularly women, persist.

### *Paragraph 182*

The State party is urged to undertake measures to address the economic, social and cultural factors that are the root causes of the problem of inequality of access to education, high drop-out rates for boys and high illiteracy rates among adults, in particular women.

- Sudan, ICESCR, E/2001/22 (2000) 57 at para. 315.

Concern is expressed that the high illiteracy rate, especially among rural women, deprives the State party of the much needed economic and social contribution that Sudanese women could and should make to their society, especially if and when the State party finds its way to eliminating all aspects of discrimination against women in the Sudan.

- Portugal, ICESCR, E/2001/22 (2000) 70 at paras. 417 and 425.

### *Paragraph 417*

The relatively high school drop-out rates and the rate of high illiteracy are noted with concern.

### *Paragraph 425*

The State party is urged to intensify its campaign against the persisting problem of illiteracy.

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- Morocco, ICESCR, E/2001/22 (2000) 82 at paras. 542, 543 and 567.

### *Paragraph 542*

Concern is expressed about the high rate of illiteracy in the State party, especially among women in rural areas.

### *Paragraph 543*

Deep concern is expressed about the low level of primary school attendance. Currently less than 50 per cent of children of both sexes are being regularly educated. In addition, access of young girls to education is considerably more limited, particularly in the rural areas, which accounts for the fact that the adult illiteracy rate is 65 per cent for women, as against 40 per cent for men.

### *Paragraph 567*

The State party is urged to take remedial action to address the persistent problem of the high rate of illiteracy, particularly among women in rural areas.

- Honduras, ICESCR, E/2002/22 (2001) 33 at para. 135.

The high rate of illiteracy of 19.5% is regretted.

- Bolivia, ICESCR, E/2002/22 (2001) 52 at paras. 268, 270, 280 and 299.

### *Paragraph 268*

Deep concern is expressed about the extent of poverty in Bolivia. According to UNDP figures, 88.8% of all households in Bolivia have an income below the poverty line. Moreover, 90% of these households live in rural areas. This situation is reflected in indicators such as infant mortality, life expectancy, literacy rate and access to sanitation, potable water and health care services. In this regard, the highly uneven distribution of wealth is deplored.

### *Paragraph 270*

Notwithstanding the impressive number of legal instruments and policies adopted by the State party to ensure gender equality, concern is expressed about the *de facto* inequality between men and women, which is exacerbated by the perpetuation of traditional prejudices and social conditions, such as discrimination in education of the girl child in rural areas. Such discrimination is particularly reflected in the low level of representation of women in public service, the high female illiteracy rate, the unequal wages for work of equal value, and the high proportion of women working under inadequate conditions in the informal sector or as domestic workers.

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### *Paragraph 280*

Concern is expressed about the slow progress in literacy training and the still high levels of illiteracy in Bolivia. According to UNESCO, the level of illiteracy for adults is 16.3%. The situation for children is also alarming: 70% of children under nine years of age do not attend school.

### *Paragraph 299*

It is recommended that the State party give priority to education in its budget, establish literacy programmes for adults, in particular in the rural areas, and make efforts to increase the school attendance levels of children under the age of nine. In this regard, the State party is urged to implement a comprehensive National Education for All Plan, as anticipated by paragraph 16 of the Dakar Framework of Action, taking into account General Comment numbers 11 and 13.

- Togo, ICESCR, E/2002/22 (2001) 57 at para. 318.

Particular concern is expressed with regard to the education of children. A pattern of discrimination against children, especially girls, is prevalent in the State party. According to the 2000 UNDP Human Development Report, only 70.2% of primary school age girls attend primary school, which is 74% of the male ratio. Only 40.0% of the secondary school age girls attend secondary school, which is 52% of the male ratio. At the university level, women's enrolment constitutes only 21% of the ratio for male tertiary education enrolment. This inequality is also reflected in the difference in literacy rates, which is 38.4% for adult women, only 53% of the male rate.

- Senegal, ICESCR, E/2002/22 (2001) 61 at paras. 360 and 383.

### *Paragraph 360*

The low rate of primary school enrolment and high rate of illiteracy, especially among women are matters of concern.

### *Paragraph 383*

Literacy programmes should be established for adults.

- Panama, ICESCR, E/2002/22 (2001) 73 at paras. 450, 460, 466, 478 and 479.

### *Paragraph 450*

Notwithstanding the absence of legal discrimination and the rights granted to indigenous communities by the Constitution, there is deep concern about the persisting disadvantage faced in practice by members of indigenous communities and, in particular, about the marked disparities in the levels of poverty, literacy, access to water, employment, health, education and other basic social services.



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### *Paragraph 460*

Concern remains about the low rates of literacy, especially among women.

### *Paragraph 466*

The State party should consider ratifying the ILO Convention No. 169 (1989) concerning indigenous and tribal peoples in independent countries. Particular attention should be paid to improving poverty and literacy rates and access to water, employment, health, education and other basic social services for indigenous peoples.

### *Paragraph 478*

Literacy programmes should be established for adults, especially for indigenous peoples and in rural areas.

### *Paragraph 479*

Measures should be taken that are aimed at increasing the resources available to fight illiteracy and promote primary and secondary education.

## **CEDAW**

- Tunisia, CEDAW, A/50/38 (1995) 52 at para. 267.

The high rate of illiteracy among women is of concern, since access to education is fundamental to the empowerment of women. Equally important is the fact that the number of school drop-outs among girls is high.

- Peru, CEDAW, A/50/38 (1995) 79 at para. 442.

Whereas women have been entering universities in increasing numbers, illiteracy among women still remains high and this is of concern.

- Paraguay, CEDAW, A/51/38 (1996) 16 at paras. 124 and 130.

### *Paragraph 124*

The State party's initiatives to provide bilingual education is acknowledged, but there is concern about the inadequacy of those initiatives, which pose a major obstacle to women's access to social and economic opportunities, since a large percentage of the female population spoke only Guaraní, the predominant aboriginal language. The high illiteracy and drop-out rates are major impediments to the advancement of women.

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### *Paragraph 130*

The State party should strengthen and broaden its initiatives to extend bilingual education to all citizens, in particular women, and to combat the social, economic and cultural factors causing the high drop-out and illiteracy rates among women.

- Dominican Republic, CEDAW, A/53/38/Rev.1 part I (1998) 28 at para. 342.

Efforts to mainstream a gender perspective in all of the Government's reforms should be continued. Priority areas for targeted actions for women should be identified. The reduction and elimination of illiteracy, the creation of jobs and the implementation of labour legislation and reforms are suggested for such priority attention.

- Nigeria, CEDAW, A/53/38/Rev.1 part II (1998) 61 at para. 167.

Efforts should be increased through implementation of a specific programme to reduce illiteracy among women, particularly in rural areas, and to promote access by girls to secondary education. The Government should ensure that primary education is free.

### *See also:*

- Democratic Republic of the Congo, CEDAW, A/55/38 part I (2000) at para. 244.
- Panama, CEDAW, A/53/38/Rev.1 part II (1998) 64 at para. 199.

Concern is expressed at the fact that 53 per cent of the female population is illiterate, the majority of these being indigenous women. The persistence of gender stereotypes, which results in a large number of adolescent girls terminating their education at an early age to marry or to undertake domestic work, is also of concern.

- Peru, CEDAW, A/53/38/Rev.1 part II (1998) 72 at paras. 331 and 332.

### *Paragraph 331*

Concern is expressed about the fact that illiteracy rates among women are very high. The importance of focusing on educating women is stressed so that they can exercise their rights as citizens.

### *Paragraph 332*

Particular attention should be paid to literacy programmes and they should be implemented in a

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sustained manner.

- Algeria, CEDAW, A/54/38/Rev.1 part I (1999) 12 at para. 76.

The development and implementation of a legal literacy strategy and training for all levels of society in order to address discriminatory cultural norms and attitudes is recommended.

- Greece, CEDAW, A/54/38/Rev.1 part I (1999) 20 at paras. 201 and 202.

### *Paragraph 201*

The relatively high level of functional illiteracy in Greece, in particular among elderly and rural women, is of concern.

### *Paragraph 202*

The Government is urged to intensify its efforts to prevent and to remedy functional illiteracy among women.

- China, CEDAW, A/54/38/Rev.1 part I (1999) 26 at para. 295.

The Government should adopt a specific time-frame, with budgetary and resource allocation, for the achievement of universal literacy and primary education. It should also abolish official and unofficial school fees, which often result in the exclusion of girls from enjoying their right to education, particularly in poor rural areas. Special measures and incentives should be introduced to ensure that girls are able to fully utilize access to primary education, and are given opportunities for secondary and higher education and vocational training.

- Spain, CEDAW, A/54/38/Rev.1 part II (1999) 67 at paras. 271 and 275.

### *Paragraph 271*

The Government is urged to strengthen public policy in order to reduce women's illiteracy and thereby enable them to have access to information concerning their rights under the Convention.

### *Paragraph 275*

Measures should be taken to improve the level of literacy, including legal literacy, of foreign women workers in domestic service, asylum seekers and women who may be living clandestinely in Spain.

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- India, CEDAW, A/55/38 part I (2000) 7 at para. 65.

The Government is urged to take affirmative action, set a time-frame and provide adequate resources for primary and secondary education so as to give girls equal access to education and eradicate adult illiteracy among women. The Government should make primary and secondary education compulsory by introducing and enforcing relevant regulations.

- Myanmar, CEDAW, A/55/38 part I (2000) 12 at para. 107.

The high literacy rate of women in Myanmar is noted with satisfaction.

- Jordan, CEDAW, A/55/38 part I (2000) 16 at para. 159.

The Government's efforts to further reduce women's illiteracy rate are commended.

- Burkina Faso, CEDAW, A/55/38 part I (2000) 25 at paras. 263, 265 and 267-269.

### *Paragraph 263*

It is noted that the economic difficulties, resulting mainly from the scarcity of State resources and the discriminatory customary and traditional practices, which are still a heavy burden for the women of Burkina Faso, exacerbate the very high illiteracy rate in Burkina Faso and therefore hinder the implementation of the Convention.

### *Paragraph 265*

The prevalence of discriminatory traditions and customs, which accentuate stereotypes and resist all change, is of concern. These social practices, attitudes and beliefs derive from an overwhelmingly rural population with low levels of literacy and are contributing to the delay in the advancement of women.

### *Paragraph 267*

Serious concern is expressed over the female illiteracy rate, particularly in rural areas, which is one of the highest in the world.

### *Paragraph 268*

It is recommended that the Government accord priority to the education of girls and women, including through seeking international assistance, to ensure and promote universal enrolment of girls and preclude drop-out. The Government is called upon to allocate more financial and human resources to the education sector, to recruit more women teachers and to ensure that school

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textbooks no longer carry negative images of women.

### *Paragraph 269*

In addition to formal education efforts should be focussed on on informal education and the campaign against illiteracy through programmes targeted at girls and women.

- Cameroon, CEDAW, A/55/38 part II (2000) 53 at paras. 57, 58 and 62.

### *Paragraph 57*



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It is of concern that primary education is not compulsory and free to all children. The limited access to education, the low rate of enrolment of girls, the low literacy rate, the poor quality of education, the general lack of relevant learning material and other resources, and the insufficient numbers of trained/qualified teachers are of concern. A study of the educational system should be undertaken with a view to improving access to education at all levels of the system, increasing the enrolment rate of girls, particularly at the secondary level, introducing local languages as additional tools of instruction, and improving the overall quality of education. Technical cooperation from UNICEF and UNESCO should be sought.

- India, CRC, CRC/C/94 (2000) 10 at paras. 37 and 41.

### *Paragraph 37*

The establishment of the Department of Education and Literacy is welcomed. The expressed commitment of the State party to achieving universal, free and compulsory primary education is noted.

### *Paragraph 41*

Traditional customs (i.e. the caste system) and societal attitudes (e.g. towards tribal groups) are obstacles to efforts to combat discrimination, and compounds, *inter alia*, poverty, illiteracy, child labour, child sexual exploitation and children living and/or working on the streets.

- Sierra Leone, CRC, CRC/C/94 (2000) 24 at para. 183.

Concern is expressed about the very high rate of illiteracy among women and the extremely low levels of primary school enrolment and graduation among girls.

- South Africa, CRC, CRC/C/94 (2000) 81 at para. 447.

With respect to the general situation of education, the following is noted with concern: the extent of overcrowding in some areas; high drop-out, illiteracy and repetition rates; lack of basic training materials; poorly maintained infrastructure and equipment; shortages of textbooks and other materials; insufficient number of trained teachers, particularly in traditionally Black communities; and low morale of teachers. The State party is encouraged to continue its efforts to promote and facilitate school attendance, particularly among previously disadvantaged children, girls and children from economically disadvantaged families. In light of article 28 of the Convention, it is recommended that the State party take effective measures to ensure that primary education is available free to all. Furthermore, effective measures should be taken to improve the quality of education and to provide

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access for all children within the State party. The State party is further urged to implement additional measures to encourage children to stay in school, at least during the period of compulsory education.

### *See also:*

- Lesotho, CRC, CRC/C/103 (2001) 57 at para. 361.
  
- Malta, CRC, CRC/C/97 (2000) 75 at paras. 438 and 439.

### *Paragraph 438*

The State party's achievements in the field of education are welcomed. However, concern is expressed about issues of illiteracy, absenteeism and bullying in schools.

### *Paragraph 439*

The State party should continue strengthening its educational programme with a view to improving its quality and relevance. The State party should seek to implement additional measures to encourage children to stay in school, particularly during the period of compulsory education.

- Central African Republic, CRC, CRC/C/100 (2000) 77 at para. 408.

The very high illiteracy rate among the population is a serious impediment to implementation of certain aspects of the Convention in the countryside.

- Comoros, CRC, CRC/C/100 (2000) 110 at paras. 640 and 641.

### *Paragraph 640*

School enrolment ratios are low and equal access to education is not ensured. The high level of illiteracy in the country, the gender disparities in school attendance and high drop out rates are also matters of concern. The education system is affected by a general lack of facilities and equipment, insufficient qualified teachers, and a drastic shortage of text books and other learning materials.

### *Paragraph 641*

Efforts should be continued to promote and facilitate school attendance, particularly among girls. In the light of article 28 of the Convention, the State party should take effective measures to ensure that primary education is available to all, to improve the quality of teaching and to reduce drop-out rates. The State party is encouraged to strengthen its educational system, if necessary by seeking further international assistance, from *inter alia*, UNICEF and UNESCO.

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*See also:*

- Djibouti, CRC, CRC/C/97 (2000) 96 at paras. 556 and 557.
- Egypt, CRC, CRC/C/103 (2001) 36 at paras. 242 and 243.

*Paragraph 242*

The lack of success of literacy programmes for school dropouts is of concern.

*Paragraph 243*

In relation to the literacy classes, the State party is encouraged to study the reasons for their poor success rates, paying attention, *inter alia*, to programme content, class scheduling, and negative social perceptions held by young people of such classes.

- Lesotho, CRC, CRC/C/103 (2001) 57 at para. 362.

The State party should continue its efforts to increase the school attendance and literacy rates of herd-boys in mountainous regions, including through research into the structural and other underlying causes for the failure of boys to complete their education and through consideration of possible solutions such as alternative approaches to care for cattle and flexible school hours and curricula. Measures should be introduced to broaden the provision of free education generally with a view to ensuring access to education for all children. All appropriate measures should be taken to increase the number of trained teachers, strengthen the educational infrastructure and curriculum, and improve the coordination of education policy, the management of schools and the quality of education. The State party should undertake additional measures to motivate parents to encourage their children to enrol in school and complete their education.

- Democratic Republic of the Congo, CRC, CRC/C/108 (2001) 31 at para. 210.

It is recommended that the State party strengthen efforts to improve the access of girls to education, including by establishing specific programmes to reduce female illiteracy and information campaigns promoting this right.