

Overview of juvenile justice in Togo and in DRC

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Can you describe how the actions led by BICE in your country help to promote a fairer system of juvenile justice ?

Alphonse AKAKPO : In Togo, child protection and juvenile justice are entirely centred upon the child in conflict with the law, whereas proper support should include his family and community. We are trying to set out new guidelines for child protection.

I have seen at this Congress that other countries have already applied the same measures and that the results are positive. This is very encouraging !

Ngaliéma Aimé ADJI : In DRC, there is no alternative to imprisonment for children in conflict with the law. We are encouraging private centres to take in adolescents to assist with their rehabilitation. Thanks to this action, around 150 children a year are able to avoid imprisonment. When this is not possible, we try to place adolescents with foster families, or engage them in community work.

What are the next challenges for juvenile justice in your countries ?

Ngaliéma Aimé ADJI : To be creative ! There have been recent legal changes to the juvenile justice system in DRC ; however, due to lack of means or political motivation, we have not been able to implement them. We need to develop other tools ; for example, we would like to develop and strengthen mediation committees.

These committees constitute an extra-judicial mechanism : juvenile court judges can refer cases where it appears that a solution may be found outside the courts. The mediation process brings together the child in conflict with the law, the complainants, and the community. A trial and sentence can often be avoided through this process.

Alphonse AKAKPO : In Togo, one of our priorities is to emphasize prevention. We have noticed an increase in the number of children living in the street. With their lives often in danger, these adolescents develop survival strategies which lead to breaking the law. We must do our utmost to avoid family breakdown and conflicts which leave these children without care.

We have also noticed that unfortunately, children in conflict with the law are often from deprived backgrounds or reconstituted families. We must work with families and the community to improve their socio-economic conditions.

What were your first impressions after two days of the Congress ?

Ngaliéma Aimé ADJI ([National Catholic Childhood Bureau in the Democratic Republic of Congo](#)) : I am very happy to have participated in the Congress. In our country, juvenile justice is far from being a priority. On our return, we aim to discuss our experience with the national juvenile justice body. It will also be the occasion to discuss how we can set up certain practices described at the Congress.

Alphonse AKAKPO ([National Catholic Childhood Bureau in Togo](#)) : It was an excellent initiative on the part of BICE to involve its partners in the Congress. We have been able to develop our networks, discuss our practices, and share experience.