

Written Statement submitted by: Associazione Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII

TITLE: Right to Education and Most Vulnerable Children

In spite of the achievements made so far in implementing the Millennium Development Goal 2, the right to education is still denied to too many children.

The Association Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII (APG23) has observed, in countries where it is present, that the problems connected to the right to education are mainly as follows: widespread lack of access to primary school; poor quality of public school systems; poor training of teachers and, especially in Sub-Saharan Africa, their frequent turnover; adoption, in some countries, of threatening educative practices, including corporal punishment; finally, shortage of acceptable and accessible facilities.

Furthermore, for children living in poverty, the lack of adequate food is a great obstacle to learning.

Among children who never attend or drop out of school, there are children who are extremely vulnerable: children living in extreme poverty, children orphaned and deprived of any kind of support, children living with or affected by HIV/AIDS, children living and/or working on the street, children living in war or armed conflict, child soldiers, internally displaced children, etc.

In a few countries in the world, children with physical, and in particular mental disabilities, have a possibility to interact in school classes with peers. Nevertheless, there are too many countries that are still adopting separated and 'special education' systems. In Africa, Latin America, Asia and East Europe, there are many commendable activities and projects of this kind, but often, however, marginalizing. There is a widespread attitude of focusing on disabilities rather than bringing out the potential that the children with disabilities are able to give to the school and general community.

Therefore, APG23 wishes to recommend to Member States to:

1. Promote the insertion of all children into educational systems, paying particular attention to the integration of the weakest and those most discriminated against society. Where this is not possible, to support alternative and community-based educational paths such as community schools, literacy programmes etc;
2. Establish, following the principle of "horizontal subsidiarity" and the child's best interests, a synergic procedure which aims to give value and harmonize the specific tasks of those people and institutional bodies that are involved in the safeguarding of children rights to education;
3. Develop indicators that measure not only the quantity of children who have access to education systems but also the quality of the education provided, and report accordingly;
4. Carefully monitor and analyze exclusion and discrimination coming from HIV/AIDS stigma and structural conditions of poverty, and also the exclusion coming from effective barriers to school admission (school fees, school uniforms where applicable and contributory fees);
5. Take decisive action, in strict collaboration with all the relevant stakeholders, for the prevention of different forms of violence connected with armed conflict and the destruction of educational structures. And ensure that, when embargoes are enforced, they do not violate the rights of the children in general and especially the right to education.