



## 11<sup>th</sup> July 2011 – Position Paper on: **Right to Education**

### **Introduction**

The Association Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII is an international faith-based Non Governmental Organization recognized by the Pontifical Right, and accredited to ECOSOC in 2006 with a Special Consultative Status. Present in 27 countries and on five continents, the members of the Association share directly their lives with the least in society, and are committed to removing the causes of injustice, poverty and marginalisation worldwide.

The Association is on the forefront in the promotion of the rights of children in a comprehensive approach: family, education, life, and health.

This paper reflects the position of the Association Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII on the above-mentioned matters.

### **Education**

1. *States Parties recognize the right of the child to education, and with a view to achieving this right progressively and on the basis of equal opportunity, they shall, in particular:*
  - a) *Make primary education compulsory and available free to all;*

- b) *Encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education, make them available and accessible to every child, and take appropriate measures such as the introduction of free education and offering financial assistance in case of need;*
  - c) *Make higher education accessible to all on the basis of capacity by every appropriate means;*
  - d) *Make educational and vocational information and guidance available and accessible to all children;*
  - e) *Take measures to encourage regular attendance at schools and the reduction of drop-out rates.*
2. *States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to ensure that school discipline is administered in a manner consistent with the child's human dignity and in conformity with the present Convention.*
  3. *States Parties shall promote and encourage international cooperation in matters relating to education, in particular with a view to contributing to the elimination of ignorance and illiteracy throughout the world and facilitating access to scientific and technical knowledge and modern teaching methods. In this regard, particular account shall be taken of the needs of developing countries.<sup>1</sup>*

In those countries and territories in which the Association Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII is active, the right to education faces various challenges: many children have no access to primary education; the public education system is not able to offer a good quality service; teachers are not well trained and – especially in Sub-Saharan Africa – they are submitted to frequent turnovers; education logistics is inadequate, blocking the opportunity for all children to have an easy access to schools; finally, in some countries, teaching methods are intimidating and include corporal punishments.

Another aspect experienced by a direct involvement in children's caring that it is necessary to consider is the difficulty for them to actively participate in scholastic programmes without

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<sup>1</sup> Article 28 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

an appropriate nutrition, both in quality and in quantity. The Association responded to this problem offering nutritional support in parallel to its educational offer, method that had and has positive results: children attend school more easily and are able to participate better in classes and educational activities.

However, it is obvious that this issue is complex and many-sided, and it needs multiple and contextualised actions. Children more exposed to school's non-completion or abandon are those of poor families, especially those families who live in rural settings.

Gender equality in education is a fundamental principle to guarantee boys and girls the same opportunities for access education programmes.

The Association focuses its attention on the right to education not only because it is an inalienable right of every child, but also because it is one of the key measures to redeem social-excluded peoples from poverty and to allow them to actively participate in the decision-making process.

In this regard, the APG23 goals are as follows:

- xxiii** **Collaboration with public school systems** for avoiding discrimination, encouraging the integration of children with disabilities;
- xxiii** **Escort children** on the length from villages to schools in those areas affected by conflicts or by blood-revenge acts that follow tribal codes such as the so-called Kanun in Albania;
- xxiii** **Rainbow Project** – The Rainbow Project allows orphans and vulnerable children to join their right to have access to school, otherwise denied, through advocacy measures, realization and support of community schools, payment of scholastic fees;
- xxiii** Management and support of **educational centres** for children with psychophysical disabilities and/or learning difficulties;
- xxiii** Management and support of educational centres directed to **train children at risk of living and/or working on the street**, with the view of permitting them to join primary school;
- xxiii** Advocacy for guaranteeing a full enjoyment of the right to education for those **children discriminated** due to their physical and/or social condition,

such as children with disabilities, untouchable children, and children in revenge;

- xxiii** Promotion of **training and professional activities** for youth with difficulties in joining the educational and/or job system due to the poverty and/or the break-up of their familiar or social violence-exposed setting;
- xxiii** Promotion of **training classes** on peace and non-violence.

On this regard, APG23 recommends the following points:

- xxiii** Considered that many children of the world have no access to education due to financial difficulties of their families or their absence, Governments should improve policies aimed at guaranteeing the right to education for all children, carefully monitoring, at the meantime, this process;
- xxiii** Considered that education and scholastic instruction are of great importance for the growing of every person, Governments should pay more attention on the quality of the national education systems, quality that is based on programmes' validity, structures' and teaching aids' propriety, appropriate teachers' trainings, and on periodical controls on pedagogy and results. In this regard, Governments should develop indicators that measure not only the number of children who have access to education systems, but also the quality of the education provided, and report accordingly the outcomes, especially when they give details on MDG 2-related data;
- xxiii** Considered the importance of the education systems for the integration into the society of persons with disabilities and/or socially excluded (ethnic minorities, nomads, border-line persons, etc.) in order to offer all the same opportunity to develop and uptake their own capacities, and to facilitate a growing process that is able to accept "diversities", Governments should encourage the scholastic institutions to realize the above-mentioned integration through appropriate facilities, inclusive pedagogy, and a well-trained sensitive teaching staff;
- xxiii** Finally, considered the destructive impact of corporal punishment on the natural growing of a child (for example: anger, lack of self-confidence and/or

enthusiasm) and the fact that corporal punishments hide the unpreparedness of teachers and the lack of an appropriate educational methodology, Governments should respect all the relevant articles aimed at protecting children from the above-mentioned practices, in particular articles 3, 6, 19, 28, 37, and 40 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Governments should also legislate for definitively stopping those practices giving teachers a sense of responsibility, training them appropriately, and relieving of their duties those persons who persist on committing corporal punishment on children.

### **APG23 Advocacy Before the United Nations**

The Association Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII is accredited with Special Consultative Status to the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations Organization since 2006, and in April 2009 it opened an APG23 Representation to the United Nations in Geneva. The Association participated in numerous events, such as meetings of the Human Right Council, the Universal Periodic Review, the World Health Organization, ECOSOC High Level Segments and Annual Ministerial Reviews, the UNAIDS Programme Coordinating Boards, and the Committee of the Rights of the Child in order to advocate for new policies directed to assure the respect of human rights for all. The AGP23 Representatives met and are still meeting officers of Governments, the United Nations, and of other International Organizations, and thanks to this network it was able to organize or be involved in several education-related meetings, such as:

- xxiii** 16<sup>th</sup> Regular Session of the Human Rights Council (28 February-25 March 2011, Geneva, Switzerland), co-signature of the joint-Written Statement entitled *The Right to Education of Children Living and/or Working in the Street*;
- xxiii** ECOSOC High Level Segment 2011 (4-7 July 2011, Geneva, Switzerland), Written Statement promoted by the Association Comunità Papa Giovanni XXIII entitled *Right to Education and Most Vulnerable Children*.