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It is essential to grasp properly the full meaning of the CONVENTION. It goes far beyond the simple protection of the Child and the young person. Through an exhaustive, progressive and prioritised presentation, one which is consistent with the rights, it bestows on the Child and the young person a role of subject and player. Many attitudes are brought to evolve because of it.

The main aspects which will help our understanding of the new international approach are as follows:

**The child as the possessor of rights:** The CONVENTION assigns specific rights to the child and adolescent but not special exclusive rights. The adjective<sup>2</sup>specific<sup>2</sup> implies a strengthening of the rights held by human beings no matter how old they are, and adapting them to children and adolescents according to the state of development they have reached. They may be grouped into four categories:

**The right to survival:** right to life (art 6); to health (art 24); to a sufficient living standard (art 27); to social security (art 8); to protection in armed conflict (art 38); also, that parents be given the help they deserve to bring up their children (art 18).

**The right to development:** right to education (art 28 and 29); access to information (17); to the preservation of their identity (art 8); to a name and a nationality (art 7); not to be separated from their parents (art 9); to freedom of thought, conscience and religion (art 14); to recreation and culture (art 31); protection of mentally or physically handicapped children (art 23); protection against abuses of the penal system (art 37 and 40); against sexual abuse (art 34); against the selling of or trading in children (art 35); against the illicit use of drugs (art 33).

**The right to sharing or participation:** right to freedom of expression (art 13); to express opinions and to be listened to in matters which concern them (art 12); freedom of association and the right to hold peaceful meetings (art 15); the right to undertake an active Lasallian educational project within society in general.

**The greater interest of the child:** this principle is basic to interpreting and applying norms for the child and adolescent, and establishes obligatory lines of action in all aspects of society and sets limits to personal interpretation in their accomplishment.

**Absolute Priority: children come first;** therefore it is essential to cater

above all to their needs and basic rights. This follows from children's intrinsic value, since they are human beings at a specific stage of development, which makes them completely human in every stage of their growth; moreover they have value prospectively, because all children are the continuation of their family, their people and of humankind.

**Sharing:** In order to make children's legal rights effective, it is necessary to ensure full sharing by and control of persons, families, organised societies to which children and adolescents belong as well as of children themselves. Only by following this principle will it be possible to create effective means to enforce and guarantee the Rights of the child. Groups responsible for this are the State, the Family, and the Community.

**The fundamental role of the family:** The family is privileged as the natural and primary means of guaranteeing the development and protection of the child and adolescent. Parents have the primary responsibility for their children's care and education. To ensure this, the State must give families the assistance they need to fulfil their responsibilities. Help given to families is help given to the child. Therefore this principle avoids measures which separate the child from its family, in the broadest sense of the word 'family' which includes its closest relatives.

We are committed to being aware of the CONVENTION, to acting on it correctly in the family and school and to choosing from among ourselves persons who will co-operate with one another in the public defence of children whether they are in Lasallian institutions or in educational centres near our own.