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Community practices in child protection

Examples of Brazil, Colombia, Peru, Ecuador
and Nicaragua

Review of available documentation on Internet

Founded in 1960, Terre des hommes (Tdh) helps to build a better future for disadvantaged children and their communities, with an innovative approach and practical, sustainable solutions. Active in more than 30 countries, Tdh develops and implements field projects to allow a better daily life for over 1.4 million children and their close relatives, particularly in the domains of health care and protection. This engagement is financed by individual and institutional support, of which 85% flows directly into the programs of Tdh.

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1. Type of research

The research focused on internet documentation with a view to identifying and profiling community practices in child protection in Brazil, Colombia, Peru, Ecuador and Nicaragua. It was conducted between 25 October 2010 and 25 January 2011.

Objectives

- Identify child protection practices in Brazil, Colombia, Peru, Ecuador and Nicaragua
- Contribute to discussion on community practices in Latin America within Terre des hommes¹
- Enhance the report “What are we learning about protecting children in the community?”²

Research strategy

Google and Clusty advanced search engines were used to identify relevant documents using the following search terms: ‘community participation’, ‘community practices’, ‘experiences of community participation’, ‘community participation mechanisms’, ‘children’s participation’.

The following extra keywords were added to refine the search: ‘country name’, ‘childhood’, ‘the situation for children’, ‘child protection’, ‘child protection system’, ‘children’, ‘adolescents’, ‘justice for minors’, ‘sexual exploitation of children’, ‘child labour’, ‘child abuse’, ‘sexual abuse of children’, ‘street children’, ‘children’s health’, ‘nutrition’.

157 PDF documents and 50 Word documents, published between 2000 and 2010, were identified, of which 90% are in Spanish and 10% in Portuguese. Moreover, 45 governmental and NGO websites were searched using Terre des hommes’ KIT Norma database. The documents identified were classified by country according to the following criteria:

- the situation for children
- the legal framework for child protection
- national child protection systems
- community participation in child protection experiences

Document quality

A total of 61 documents were examined and are the source of information. They capitalise on the experiences, evaluations, and organisational reports developed by the main national and international child protection organisations.

Scope of the research

This study has identified and explored a significant sample of community child protection practices, which has led to a better understanding of national child protection systems. It feeds thinking on the subject and has reflected on the new social, cultural and organisational realities faced by child protection systems. Finally, this research enhances other studies of community participation in child protection and has strongly contributed to the process of capitalizing on community experiences in Latin America.

¹ The various initiatives taken by governments in favour of communities and described in this research do not reflect the position of Terre des hommes-Lausanne on community practices. Moreover, by the theoretical nature of this research, Terre des hommes is in no case able to confirm the effectiveness of the initiatives described in this work.

² Save the Children UK. What are we learning about protecting children in the community? London, 2009

2. Community approach in child protection

In Brazil, Colombia, Peru, Ecuador and Nicaragua the existence of National Child Protection Systems (NCPS) is based on a policy of promoting community participation by giving regional, local and community organisations autonomy, decision-making powers and resources with a view to implementing the system's programmes.

The move towards this approach has become stronger over the past ten years as beneficiaries of social policies have become aware of their rights. In this respect it is common for communities to take part in the development of policies as well as their implementation and evaluation.

As there are many dimensions to child protection, different NCPS often develop their programmes together with various specialist child protection organisations, such as multilateral bodies, national and international NGOs, civil society networks and community groups.

In particular, multilateral bodies, international NGOs, local NGOs and networks working in child protection also seek to promote and fund community participation to implement their policies. There is agreement among these organisations that community participation plays a positive role in protection systems and for this reason the community approach has been adopted as official policy and is a central part of their work.

For all these organisations, community involvement is the most important factor in preventing and responding effectively to situations of children at risk. This is why they support a community-based approach to child protection policies, processes and programmes. They also play an important role in providing training and financial support for local community organisations and through advocacy work at all levels of protection systems.

3. National Child Protection Systems (NCPS) and their community mechanisms

Community mechanisms for child protection (institutions, strategic plans, programmes, monitoring policies) of National Child Protection systems (NCPS) in Brazil, Colombia, Peru, Ecuador and Nicaragua are based on the legal framework of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child (CRC), national child protection conventions and national constitutions.

In these countries, community practices in child protection make up an integral part of national public policy. This is underlined below in the brief summaries of the specialised organisations acting as NCPS governing and coordinating authorities.



3.1. BRAZIL

9th largest economy in the world, according to the World Bank (WB), with a GDP (PPP) of 2,020,079 million dollars and a population of 184 million, Brazil has the largest economy in Latin America and the third largest in the Americas.

The child protection system is managed by the *Ministry for Social Development and Hunger Reduction (MDS)*³ and was set up in 2004 to strengthen the network of organisations responsible for protecting and promoting children's rights and to coordinate food security and nutritional activities by providing

³ <http://www.mds.gov.br/>

social protection and money transfers and setting up income-generating projects. The Ministry's annual budget is 6,000 million dollars and 32 million children receive its assistance. The Ministry's most important programmes are:

- Family health teams
- Community health staff
- Food security and nutrition
- Eradication of child labour
- Combating child abuse and sexual exploitation
- Protection of children with disabilities
- Education and health for people from ethnic minorities
- Child-friendly president



3.2. COLOMBIA

27th largest economy in the world (WB) with a GDP (PPP) of 404,995 million dollars and a population of 45 million, Colombia has the fourth largest economy in Latin America and the sixth largest in the Americas.

The child protection system is managed by the *Colombian Institute for Family Welfare (ICBF)*⁴. It was set up in 1968 and is responsible for facilitating cross-organisational working and for planning and coordinating the monitoring and evaluation of early childhood policy. The ICBF is part of the Ministry of Social Protection, its annual budget is 1,65 million dollars and 12 million children receive its assistance. Its most significant protection programmes are:

- Comprehensive early childhood services
- Community households and mothers
- Support for deaf children
- Food security and nutrition
- Penal responsibility system for young people
- Social and cultural support for Amerindian, Raizal and Roma families and families of African descent
- Services for children displaced by force



3.3. PERU

7th largest economy in the world (WB) with a GDP (PPP) of 252,185 million dollars and a population of 27 million.

The *National System of Integrated Children's Services (SNAINA)*⁵ is the body responsible for developing policies for promoting, protecting and providing services for children. It is part of the Ministry of Women and Social Development (MIMDES). Its annual budget is 550 million dollars and 10.5 million children receive its assistance. Its most important child protection programmes are:

- Community child safeguarding committees
- Protecting children with no family
- Safe and healthy pregnancy and birth
- Nutritional assistance
- Expanding special education
- Eliminating the worst forms of child labour
- Basic intercultural education



3.4. ECUADOR

61st largest economy in the world, according to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), with a GDP (PPP) of 106,993 million dollars and a population of 14 million.

The organisation responsible for managing the child protection system is the *Institute for Childhood and Adolescence (INFA)*⁶. It was set up in 2008 with the aim of contributing to a comprehensive system for children's development and the protection of children from abuse, sexual abuse and exploitation by bringing together all organisations involved in protecting children. The institute is part of the Ministry for Social and Economic Inclusion (MIES). Its annual budget is 165 million dollars and 2.6 million children benefit from its work. Its most important programmes are:

- Child development: Child development centres, Growing with our children, Wawa Kamayuk Wasi, Early development units, Child development gardens
- Special protection: Academic support, Study grants, Adoption, Eliminating dangerous work practices, Eradicating begging and Protecting children in prison
- Participation and citizenship
- Supporting those at risk: Medical assistance and rehabilitation, Training for deaf and blind people.

⁴ <http://www.icbf.gov.co/>

⁵ <http://www.mimdes.gob.pe/>

⁶ <http://mies.gov.ec/>



3.5. NICARAGUA

95th largest economy in the world (IMF) with GDP (PPP) of 36,259 million dollars and a population of 5.8 million.

The organisation responsible for managing the child protection system is the *Ministry for Families, Adolescence and Childhood (MIFAN)*⁷.

Its annual budget is 36 million dollars and 2.6 million children receive its assistance. Its most important programmes are:

- *Comprehensive support for children*
- *Community children's centres: health, education and nutrition support*

4. Description of community practices in child protection

Community practices in child protection are, for the most part, broadly effective. The ways in which they work vary according to the context of each country and are influenced by historic, economic, ethnic, cultural and organisational factors. In most cases, these practices are an integral part of NCPS; elsewhere it is a matter of regional practices dependent on regional government or international organisations. There are also local practices put into place by national and international NGOs.

In this context, it has been possible to identify the many practices where community participation plays a key role. From these, a random sample of programmes and projects has been taken and described below.

4.1. NCPS PROGRAMMES



4.1.1. Brazil

4.1.1.1. Children's health

*The Children's Health Programme*⁸ falls within the scope of family health services, in particular during the mother's pregnancy. Parental participation plays an important role in preventing infant mortality, improving the quality and quantity of food consumed and improving household sanitation and infrastructure. Thanks to its comprehensive sexual and reproductive health and family support policy the programme helps reduce

unsafe abortions and maternal mortality. Antenatal consultations are very important for the health of both the mother and the child. Here, 97% of Brazilian children are born in hospitals and 49% of Brazilian women have at least six antenatal appointments.



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Primary healthcare programmes such as the *Family Healthcare Programme* and the *Community Health workers Programme (PAC)* are an effective way to ensure children and their families stay healthy. The governing principles of these programmes are universality, comprehensiveness and equity of services, decentralisation and social control of public policy.

Within the *Community Health workers Programme (PAC)*, community workers are part of a

⁷ <http://www.mifamilia.gob.ni/>

⁸ <http://andi.org.br/redeandibrasil>

Neighbourhood Health Unit, a multidisciplinary team that includes a family doctor, a nurse, an auxiliary nurse, a dentist, a hygienist and community health workers. In 2006 there were 25,964 family health teams across 5,081 neighbourhoods serving 83 million people (45% of the population).

These programmes were successful in reducing malnutrition in children. However, 3.6% of one-year-olds and 7.7% of children between one and two were underweight. To address this, Brazil's government distributed iron and vitamin A to children from six months to 18 years old and to women up to three months after giving birth.

There are also other initiatives such as the *Child protection-friendly Hospitals*, *Breastfeeding Support* and the *National Network of Human Milk Banks*. Some neighbourhoods have become aware of the huge impact that breastfeeding has on the health of their population and aim to get private companies to increase the period of maternity leave from four to six months. The initiative is part of the "Maternity leave: six months is better!" campaign run by the Brazilian Paediatrics Society, the Brazilian Lawyers' Association and the Parliamentary Front for children. Besides, six months' maternity leave is already a reality in many neighbourhoods and some states.

Other effective activities for protecting children's health are also in place such as:

- *The Posties' project*. 17,000 postmen and women have received training to provide information to families on breastfeeding, helping more than two million pregnant women and children under one.
- *Help for newborns*. The Ministry of Health is investing resources to improve the quality and coverage of antenatal care, making birth less impersonal and reducing the number of caesareans.
- *Care for high-risk pregnancies*. Thanks to government support for 255 hospitals, the Neonatal Screening Programme Identifying children affected by congenital diseases using the Guthrie test has been put in place.
- *National immunisation programme*. This has been in place for 30 years and provides free vaccines against tetanus, whooping-cough, diphtheria, mea-

sles, mumps and serious forms of tuberculosis. These illnesses are currently under control. Children receive vaccines against meningitis and hepatitis B and women of childbearing age are systematically vaccinated against tetanus and diphtheria. Since 1989, no cases of infantile paralysis have been recorded.

- *Drops*. This is a national campaign with the aim of eradicating poliomyelitis by immunising children under five with two drops of oral vaccine. In 1994, Brazil received Certification of Poliomyelitis Eradication from the World Health Organization.
- *Kangaroo Mother Care*. This involves placing the baby in skin-to-skin contact with the mother. The baby is placed vertically in a pouch which imitates that of a kangaroo. This method makes caring for premature and low birth weight babies less mechanical, promotes breastfeeding, increases the bond between mother and child, and reduces the need for hospital care and the risk of hospital infection.

4.1.1.2. Eradication of child labour

Over 14 years, Brazil's ministries, schools, unions, employers and communities have begun many initiatives for combating child labour⁹. These include surveys of households to gain reliable statistical data and measure trends, mechanisms for identifying exploited children (including inspections, telephone helplines, neighbourhood watchdogs and neighbourhood councils for protecting children's rights), and, recently, a register of school enrolments that includes information on children's labour. The country has also taken steps to ensure that children who work are integrated in school and their families are included in *income transfer* programmes.

The Ministry of Education plays a key role in this and is in charge of implementing the *School Grant* programme which is a conditional money transfer programme linked to school attendance.

Another programme aimed at reducing children's labour through conditional money transfers is the *Family Grant* programme that was set up in 2003 by the MDS and is aimed at households with an income of less than 22 dollars per person. The *Family Grant* programme provides between 22 and 42 dollars per household, according to the number of children between zero and 14 years of age.

⁹ <http://white.oit.orp.pe/ipec/documentos/folletotirra.pdf>

A further initiative for combating child labour in Brazil is the *Eliminating Child Labour Programme (PETI)*. This is a programme for transferring income from the federal government to families and children who work at a young age. The PETI is in place through partnerships with central government, municipalities and civil society.



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The PETI aims to ensure that children can access and take part in school by supplementing their family's income, providing social and educational measures to aid families and encouraging children to expand their knowledge through cultural, sporting and leisure activities. The programme seeks to improve the quality of life of beneficiary families, encouraging a change in habits and attitudes to school and community activities, creating jobs, providing technical assistance and credit facilities at low interest rates.

Thanks to the *PETI*, Brazil's government can oversee a million children in 3,300 municipalities. The programme has an annual budget of approximately 250 million dollars, 60% of which is used to pay monthly allowances to the families of children who work. The remainder is split between municipalities to promote social and educational activities through the *Extended Hours* programme.

In 2006, the government merged the *PETI* and *Family Grant* programmes and under its new statute the programme has a budget of 4,000 million dollars and 9 million families receive its assistance.

Another child protection tool which relates to child labour is the *National Forum for Preventing and Eliminating Child Labour (FNPETI)*. Set up in 1994, it brings together social movements involved in preventing and eliminating child labour in Brazil, including representatives from the main unions and employers' organisations, relevant ministries, NGOs and international organisations. Over 16 years, these different organisations have been brought together by the FNPETI's work, resulting in increased effectiveness. By integrating their activities, the organisations have been able to develop and implement a national and sustainable policy for combating child labour.

The FNPETI's priorities are the following:

- to organise data on child labour in Brazil
- to analyse legislation relating to child labour
- to promote links between government, unions, employers and non-governmental organisation
- to improve state education for all Brazilian children
- to encourage the creation and development of programmes supplementing family income
- to promote sustainable local development.

Setting up and running the FNPETI has marked a turning point in child labour in Brazil. Its activities have meant that child labour is becoming a development issue for the country as it aims to improve access to education and quality healthcare, eradicate poverty and generate income.

Since 1992, Brazil has established processes for coordinating and mobilising organisations, and implementing national initiatives for combating child labour. With the support of the *International Programme for Eradicating Child Labour (IPEC)*¹⁰ it has

¹⁰ <http://ilo.org/public/portugue/region/ampro/brasil/ipecl>

put in place more than 100 projects throughout the country, undertaken studies and research into child labour and implemented many awareness-raising and social mobilisation campaigns.

This large social mobilisation has meant that more than 800,000 children have not needed to go to work. Over the past few years, Brazil has therefore become a role model for the world in the reduction of exploitative child labour. A new part of this process has been building a unified social movement that spans all efforts and considers all points of view that brings forward a new aspect of reality.

Worldwide, the FNPETI has been an important role model for other countries such as Colombia and Argentina.

4.1.1.3. Combating sexual exploitation of children

In 2006, the government launched the *National plan for combating sexual violence against children*¹¹. Among the main initiatives is the campaign *A goal for children's rights*¹². The campaign was launched in 2010 to combat the sexual exploitation of minors during the 2014 World Cup.

Poverty and a predicted increase in tourism during the World Cup are two explosive factors increasing the risk of child exploitation. For this reason,

the authorities are seeking to ensure that this will not be the case in the 12 cities hosting the World Cup. The slogan *Sexual exploitation of children isn't tourism, it's a crime* will be the campaign's warning message and posters will be distributed throughout the country.

Around 600,000 tourists are expected over the month of the tournament. The government also wants to form a cooperation agreement with the European Union, where the majority of tourists will be travelling from.

As football tourism is dominated by men, Brazil is discouraging high-risk charter flights, for example those only carrying male passengers, and encouraging family tourism and visits to other parts of the country. In addition, professionals working in health, transport, hospitality and the police will be trained to identify and act on cases of sexual exploitation. The campaign also has a training programme for young people from poor areas close to tourist centres to help them secure paid work in the hotel industry and stop them returning to prostitution.

Dial 100: anonymous reporting¹³

The main instrument of denunciation during the World Cup will be the dedicated telephone line. *Dial 100* receives an average of 418 complaints regarding the abuse of children every day. The reports are then examined and within 24 hours are passed on to the relevant protection agencies, ensuring the caller's identity is protected. The aim of this initiative is to break the silence surrounding cases of abuse.

*Companies in Brazil are committed to combating sexual exploitation of children*¹⁴. In August 2010, a total of 24 companies and businesses in Brazil, including some of the largest, were committed to helping the authorities combat the sexual exploitation of minors, including oil firms, banks and energy companies.



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¹¹ <http://caminhos.ufms.br/matrizdados/resumomatriz.pdf>

¹² http://espectador.com/lv4_13a0_contenido.php?id=194109&sts=1

¹³ <http://www.noticias.com/empresas-brasilenas-se-comprometen-a-combatir-explotacion-sexual-de-menores.580158>

¹⁴ <http://www.elmundo.es/elmundo/2010/10/04/solidaridad/1286195227.html>

<http://politicabrasil.suite101.net/article.cfm/empresas-brasilenas-acuerdan-luchar-contra-explotacion-infantil>

<http://www.ugt.es/actualidad/2010/diciembre/Termo%20Seminario%20ViraVida%20espanol%2030%2011%202010.pdf>

These companies signed an agreement in Rio de Janeiro to inform their clients, employees and suppliers about campaigns against the sexual exploitation of children, to encourage them to report every case. They also agreed to include clauses in their contracts explicitly denouncing this crime.



4.1.2. Colombia

Community households and Community mothers

*Community households*¹⁵ represent coordinated government and community activities aiming to promote the psychosocial, mental and physical development of 1.3 million children under the age of seven living in poverty. The process includes support for the socialisation of children and the improvement of their living conditions. *Community households* are places where children from a specific community receive basic care, pre-school education and food, all provided by the *Community mothers*.

Among their main activities are:

Nutrition and health. Children are given a nutritional supplement that supplies 70% of the calories and nutrients necessary for their development. Community households are responsible for monitoring children's nutritional state and registering them on growth and development, hygiene, and prevention of infectious diseases programmes.

Psychosocial development. The processes for psychological development and for socialising children follow Qualitative Notation Development Scale criteria.

Activities with parents. These focus on the promotion and development of educational processes to strengthen relationships between children, families and the community; training parents by linking them to Family schools and health services; and ensuring the civil registration of birth.

Activities with Community mothers. They must follow an on-going training program to stay within the community household program. They receive food coupons during working days as well as financial support to improve their living conditions. Their affiliation to the formal system of social, health and education services is encouraged.

Activities with associations of Community mothers. A process of on-going training is in place to allow them to certify their work and community participation is encouraged to improve living conditions.

Activities with government organisations. Households work together with other bodies sharing common objectives guaranteeing children gradual transition and vaccinations according to their age.

Types of care. Community households operate in the private homes of Community mothers between 6 am and 4 pm. Every household accommodates between 12 and 14 children under the age of six with a maximum of two aged between three months and two years. There are two types of community household: *Single community households* that accommodate children between two and six years old, and *Multiple community households* that accommodate children between ten months and four years of age.



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¹⁵ <http://lanic.utexas.edu/project/etext/llilas/ilassa/2004/artega.pdf>
http://base.d-p-h.info/es/fiches/premierdph/fiche_premierdph6477.html
<https://www.icbf.gov.co/icbf/directorio/portel/libreria/php/03..html>

Their objectives are to:

- *promote families' improved living conditions and the suitable development of children under seven in extreme poverty*
- *promote the development of children under seven through the use of educational, family and community activities*
- *strengthen the family unit by aligning children's activities with educational processes*
- *contribute to improving the nourishment of children under seven by providing food supplements that meet their calorific and nutritional needs*
- *contribute to improving the state of health of children under seven alongside the national health service.*

Community mothers¹⁶

The ICBF stipulates that women fulfil a number of criteria to qualify as a Community mother: they must have secondary level education, not have any legal problems, own their own home, be in good physical and mental health, have healthy relationships with others, enjoy working with children and be aged between 25 and 50.

In the first instance, women who want to apply to be a Community mother register for the programme's introductory training course, which focuses on the educational skills of local adults in their role as natural educators of children and advocates of cultural values within their group. Training encourages the reflection on and sharing of experiences with their children over the years. By talking about their actions and acquiring new skills, the adults become more aware of what they can achieve both collectively and individually.

A psychological evaluation of the candidate is also undertaken during the selection process, as well as a home visit and an interview with the family in order to understand the family situation and the opinions of the other family members on becoming a Community household.

The training process for Community mothers highlights the following themes: the characteristics and needs of a child under seven; working with groups of children aged between two and seven; the role of adults in the development of children; managing and using space; using teaching materials; implementing daily planning tools; health and nutrition; and the handling and storage of food.

Once appointed, the 85'000 Community mothers receive benefits such as funds for improving their home, health insurance for themselves and their families, and remuneration.

This experience shows how **communities' members play a part in their own processes of development.** In community education, there are two significant levels of participation: firstly, initiating community participation in administrative processes, identifying needs, managing resources and coordinating activities with locally-based decentralised government organisations. Secondly, through participation in educational programmes that results in the use of teaching practices that reflect the needs and cultural identity of districts and communities. This should be through a direct appeal to communities and open dialogue. Finally, it is important to highlight the global nature of these experiences of the environment, health and education.

¹⁶ <http://ilsa.atarraya.org/derechos/madres.html>



4.1.3. Peru

Local Child Safeguarding Committees (DEMUNA)

DEMUNAs¹⁷ were created as part of a civil society initiative for promoting and protecting children's rights, joining together the contributions of local civil society and government organisations. They have multiple functions:

- to understand the situation faced by children placed in public and private institutions
- to promote the strengthening of family ties
- to encourage the voluntary acknowledgement of paternity
- to coordinate care programmes for children who work
- to give families culturally appropriate advice to prevent crisis situations
- to inform the relevant authorities of offences committed towards children and intervene on their behalf
- to promote reconciliation in conflicts related to family violence.

10.6 million children benefit from the programme, which has become the main national reconciliation network specialising in children and the family. There are currently 843 DEMUNAs present in 80% of Peru's provinces and to date 400,000 reconciliation cases have been dealt with.



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4.1.4. Equateur

Wawakamayuk Wasi

The Wawakamayuk Wasi¹⁸ (children's house) programme offers a form of integrated care which emphasises the rights of children between six months and five years that involves a process of *Family training at home (LLullu Wawakuna)* and access to care from a *Children's Knowledge Centre (Wawakuna Jatun)*. The programme's main objectives are:

- to ensure comprehensive development for children from conception to five years of age
- to safeguard the cultural identity of indigenous, Afro-Ecuadorian and Montubio (an ethnic group from the Pacific coast) populations
- to develop the cognitive, emotional, motor and social skills of children attending the Wawakamayuk Wasi
- to provide children of low weight who attend the Jatun Wawakuna centres, with 70% of their nutritional requirements
- to give community mothers and fathers training in child development to increase their participation in education and the overall development of their children
- to encourage mothers, fathers and the community to create clean environments that promote children's development both in households and the community
- to increase participation from families and community organisations in ensuring children's rights are respected
- to develop the emotional and cognitive skills of pregnant women
- to include support for children with physical disabilities and/or learning difficulties.

The minimum requirements for people from the community who provide day-to-day care are: an undergraduate degree or equivalent, one year's experience in child and community development, the ability to speak the native language of the target population, and they must live in the community in which they work.

¹⁷ <http://www.accionporlosninos.org.pe/pdfs/pcmc2.pdf>

<http://www.educared.edu.pe/estudiantes/demuna/index.htm>

¹⁸ <http://www.infa.gov.ec/infa/documentos/leydetransparencia/lotaip/formularios/desarrolloinfantil/conveniocdicnh/terminosdereferenciainmodalidadwkw.pdf>
<http://www.infa.gov.ec/infa/documentos/leydetransparencia/lotaip/miesinfasegunfuentedefinanciamiento.pdf>



This programme aims to increase understanding, inherited values and traditional educational practices, promoting the nationalities and cultural identity of indigenous, Afro-Ecuadorian and Montubio people.



4.1.5. Nicaragua

Community Children's Centres (CICOS)

CICOS¹⁹ are set up in marginalised rural and urban communities to provide health care, education and nutrition to 2.2 million children under six. The programme facilitates the development of conditions appropriate for children to enter the formal education system.

CICOS operate in buildings owned by the community or local administration and are complemented by tutors offering two types of education: *Appropriate initial education* for children under three years and *Pre-school education* for children from three to six years. Children also receive supplementary food that is prepared by parents.

Appropriate initial education is made up of early stimulation practice based on play, songs and physical exercise. *Pre-school education* is based on programme guidance provided by the Ministry of Education for this purpose.

Mothers and fathers enrolled at the CICOS give advice to pregnant and breastfeeding women on antenatal practices, hygiene and reproductive health, and preventing physical and psychological abuse.

Tutors are suggested and chosen in community meetings. They are trained in quality care, health habits, nutrition, education, restoration of rights, and management of resources and development.

CICOS tutors train fathers and mothers on different ways of communicating with their children. Every CICOS has a *Mothers and Fathers Committee*, which manages, protects, secures and monitors the quality of the services provided. It also promotes active and voluntary participation by the community.

To achieve the objective of providing comprehensive care for the under sixes, CICOS work with the health centres and schools closest to the child's home.

This program has benefited to 212.000 children of whom 56% lived in rural areas.

4.2. NATIONAL PROJECTS OUTSIDE OF NCPS

4.2.1. Internal displacement and psychosocial intervention as public policy in Colombia

As part of the process of restoring the rights of people displaced by the war in Colombia, the Colombian government, represented by the Ministry of Social Protection, produced *Guidelines for psychosocial intervention for those displaced through violence*²⁰ in order to influence and create the conditions necessary to restore the social and economic rights of the displaced population.

Psychosocial intervention is based on a holistic and interdisciplinary approach that takes into account the views of those who have been displaced. This approach aims for intersectoral and interorganisational

¹⁹ http://www.mifamilia.gob.ni/wp-content/uploads/2014/08/nor_fun_prees.pdf

²⁰ <http://www.minproteccionsocial.gov.co/files/2014/08/311-cartilla-psicosocial-trabajo-poblacion-desplazada.pdf>

agreement and promotes social support networks, social project sustainability, participatory processes, social management and social worker training. A territorial development strategy is also implemented and research carried out.



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Here, psychosocial intervention is used as a strategy for easing the impact of conflict and displacement through the process of building social identity, and social inclusion and employment activities that facilitate the rebuilding of lives with dignity.

Its institutional role is psychosocial support and care.

In terms of *psychosocial support*, intervention ranges from support and guidance for individuals, families and communities to all stages of humanitarian aid and socioeconomic stabilisation. The aim is to restore emotional well-being, repair and build social support networks and coping skills, and increase capacity to restore social, economic and cultural rights.

In terms of *psychosocial care*, intervention refers to the provision of services providing therapeutic and occupational support to individuals, families and communities. Among the most noteworthy psychosocial support and care strategies are:

- *group dynamics by age, gender and ethnicity, based on experience, recovering memory and expression of loss*

- *developing personal, family and community information hubs*
- *promoting participation in and development of individual and group projects*
- *community processes aiming that displaced people play a part in their individual and collective development*
- *legal support aiming to redress violated rights*
- *promoting projects which generate income and encourage local development.*

The policy has an annual budget of two million dollars and the beneficiaries are 300,000 children and 368'000 adults.

4.2.2. Campaign Goodbye to physical and humiliating punishment in Peru

The campaign *Goodbye to physical and humiliating punishment in Peru*²¹ is based on a global study of violence against children undertaken in 2006 by the UN and Save the Children. Since this report was produced, many countries and organisations have committed to working towards their 11 recommendations in this area.



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²¹ http://www.sai.org.uy/archivospdf/manual_castigo_arcoiris_2008.pdf
http://www.savethechildren.org.pe/web/contenido.php?v_pad=2&v_hij=46&v_pla=2&v_sal=1&idi=E&pai=17

The Committee of children and adolescents against physical and humiliating punishment is one of the principal organizations that launched the *Goodbye to physical and humiliating punishment in Peru* campaign in May 2007 along with other institutions and international cooperation. One of the campaign's main objectives is to promote and support, among other initiatives, a bill to modify the body of law relating to children, aiming to include modifications to legislate against harming the physical and psychological well-being and dignity of children.

The campaign does not only aim to influence legislation on banning physical punishment, it also seeks to increase society's awareness of the importance of eradicating physical and humiliating punishment using educational and corrective methods. Many national and international bodies and organisations have been involved during this process.

The campaign also aims to encourage children, parents, tutors and teachers to reflect on the consequences of this unacceptable practice.

To help train those responsible for children under six, a *positive discipline* module has been designed, among others. There are also training manuals and programmes for parents and teachers on good discipline, a guide on how to detect and deal with cases of physical punishment, and a manual on monitoring procedures for physical punishment cases in healthcare services.

The campaign seeks to protect 10 million children and raises awareness among Peruvian society of the negative consequences of physical and humiliating punishment on children's development and personality.

The campaign also shows the power of civil society and social networks in bringing about changes to legislation to benefit children.

4.2.3. Law on free maternity care and childcare in Ecuador

*The Law on free maternity care and childcare (LMGYAI)*²², passed in 1994 and rewritten in 1998, has changed the focus on mother and child health in Ecuador's poorest communities. This law aims to reduce maternal and child mortality by improving access to quality care for women and children and increasing community participation in decision-making and quality control processes.

By ensuring access to free healthcare during pregnancy, labour and birth, the LMGYAI represents significant progress by the government in its duty to provide healthcare for the most vulnerable groups in Ecuador.

By reducing the economic barrier that stops people accessing healthcare, the LMGYAI has stimulated an increase in coverage. It has also contributed to improved perceptions of healthcare based on civil law and the quality of public health services.

The development and application of the LMGYAI has included several innovative reforms of the health system, including:

- *separation of funding/payment functions for care provision*
- *transfers of healthcare funds to communities*
- *supervision by local management committees as opposed to solely by the Ministry of Public Health*
- *creation of user committees to ensure the law is properly implemented*
- *creation of an internal mechanism for the continuous improvement of care quality*
- *payments to health institutions according to the volume and quality of services provided.*

These reforms are based on experiences of health sector reform in Ecuador and internationally, and discussions led by Ecuadorian women's organisations, such as the National Women's Council, the Committee of women in politics, the Women's Forum and Women For Autonomy.

²² <http://www.qaproject.org/pubs/PDFs/LACHSR/LeydeMaternidadGratuita.Informe%20No%2062.pdf>
www.programamujerescdh.cl/media/.../Ecuador_mat2.doc -
<http://www.saluddealtura.com/index.php?id=289&type=123>

Another innovative characteristic of the LMG-YAI is the participation of municipal government as joint manager of health services. The LMG-YAI has created a Unit responsible for receiving money from the *Solidarity Fund* and channelling it towards local health management committees in the different areas. The *Local Health Management Committee* does not only receive funding from the Unit but also receives additional funding from the municipality and other local funding sources. Local government and civil society representatives are also involved in funding management and administration processes.

Local Management Committees and Committees of recipients are two important mechanisms that encourage the participation of social parties in diversifying healthcare provision, such as women's organisations, native people's groups, local government, not-for-profit organisations and traditional health practitioners, such as midwives.

An important step in setting up the LMGYAI has been identifying health services that should be encompassed by the law, considering the following criteria:

- *the epidemiological profile of the country for women and children, in particular the most common illnesses that are the main causes of death*
- *the Ministry of Public Health's capacity to provide health services*
- *requests from the women's movement*
- *international agreements signed by the Ecuadorian government*
- *the cost of provision for each service*
- *the annual amount allocated by the law to fund services*

Consultants and technical experts from participating organisations have defined a number of basic health services based on these criteria.

LMGYAI funding has been made possible by the *Solidarity Fund for Human Development*, a financial organisation set up in 1996 by the Ecuadorian government built on the profits of its electricity and telephone businesses. The budget allocated for implementing the LMGYAI has increased over time from eight million dollars in 1999 to 23 million dollars today.

The number of people benefiting from the LMG-YAI has also continuously increased. From 1.6 million people in 1999, that number has now reached 2.3 million women and children. Women, who make up 70% of users, are the main beneficiaries of the LMGYAI.

The mechanisms enshrined by the current law have become very important tools in improving the coverage of care and the quality of health services in Ecuador. These mechanisms include publishing clinical protocols, calculating the cost of reimbursing services, implementing a continuous quality improvement system, tools for measuring and improving the quality and impact of objectives, shared management agreements with municipalities and the organisation of healthcare user committees to ensure quality services.

4.2.4. Restorative juvenile justice in Nicaragua

In 2006, Terre des hommes undertook an exploratory mission in Nicaragua that became the basis of a subsequent pilot project concerning *Restorative juvenile justice*²³.

The project sets out a model of restorative juvenile justice with support from the judicial authorities and civil society organisations. It aims to implement alternative measures (socio-educational) to the removal of freedom, taking into account compensation for victims.



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²³ KIT Norma database. Key documents to Terre des hommes/AMLAT

The project has four strategic focuses:

- *strengthening alternative measures required by law for children in conflict with the law*
- *continuous interdisciplinary training*
- *improving technical teams and offices*
- *preventing juvenile gangs*

The key strategic ally for all activity is the Supreme Court of Justice, an institution that can mobilise and motivate a significant number of the main stakeholders.

Alongside the Supreme Court of Justice, strategic alliances with those involved in the administration of justice, social workers, the national police, the national prison system, local NGOs and international organisations have been envisaged.

Pilot areas for intervention were selected according to the following criteria:

- *existence of a significant rate of juvenile violence*
- *manageable geographic areas (medium-sized)*
- *the judges and magistrates in these areas (in particular judges and multidisciplinary teams) will have taken part in seminars organised by Terre des hommes and the Supreme Court of Justice, in 2007, on restorative juvenile justice and alternative measures to imprisonment*
- *positive predisposition and availability of judges/magistrates to put the model of restorative juvenile justice into place*
- *existence of various social agencies and public institutions able to provide reception centres*
- *municipal and regional authorities interested in the subject and willing to support the project.*

The project makes sense and is important as it addresses the need to develop the justice system for high-risk minors in Nicaragua and also addresses the needs of families, victims and members of civil society.

4.3. MUNICIPAL AND REGIONAL PROJECTS OUTSIDE OF NCPS

4.3.1. Food at school and Community restaurants in Bogotá in Colombia

The Food at school and Community restaurants programmes were developed in 2006 for Bogota's city administration (population of 8 million) as part of the Bogota, free from hunger²⁵ programme.

Food at school. As part of the programme, 47,000 children from 345 state nurseries receive a daily food ration and 630,000 children from 609 state schools in the city are provided with one hot meal a day. The programme's annual budget is 93 million dollars.

Community restaurants. There are 310 community restaurants in the city feeding 120,000 people every day, 40,000 of whom are children in vulnerable situations. The programme also provides 14,301 vouchers that can be exchanged for food and 17,418 pregnant women receive nutrition help. The programme's annual budget is 10 million dollars.

As a result of these programmes, the city of Bogota has achieved the first Millennium Development Goal, the eradication of hunger.

4.3.2. Regional plan for improving diet and nutrition (MANA) in Colombia

In 2002, the government of Antioquia (population of 5.8 million) launched the *Regional plan for improving diet and nutrition (MANA)*²⁵ and in 2004 linked up with the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO). The plan operates through six programmes: supplementing food, access to health and nutrition services, respect, diet and nutrition monitoring, agricultural production projects and education projects. The annual budget is 60 million dollars, of which 8 million dollars are provided by the FAO.

²⁴ <http://www.mineduccion.gov.co/observatorio/1722/article-252290.html>

²⁵ <http://www.infosurhoy.com/cocoon/saii/xhtml/es/features/saii/features/society/2010/11/23/feature-02>
<http://www.mineduccion.gov.co/observatorio/1722/article-217103.html>

Through 38 *Nutrition recovery centres*, 216,000 children aged between six months and six years receive nutritional supplements throughout the year: a 25g bag of milk enriched with vitamins, a 3g iron-rich biscuit and 33g of *bienestarina* (flour rich in proteins, vitamins and minerals). This complement offers 25% of the daily calories required for a healthy child, according to the Department of Nutrition in the Clinique Infantile Santa Ana, a private institution that thanks to an agreement with the State, evaluates 38 Centres for Child Nutrition in Antioquia.



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MANA also offers a *nutritional supplement at school* for 180 days per year benefiting more than 400,000 children living in poverty between the ages of six and 14 years. It also provides help to 9,800 children with varying degrees of malnutrition.

In addition, in 90 of the 125 municipalities in the Antioquia region, the FAO has trained 10,000 families on *family subsistence gardens*. Today there are 6800 gardens and according to the program, 3200 new families will receive supplies.

20,000 family subsistence farms are expected to be set up in 2011. Agricultural production from family gardens went from 296 tonnes in 2008 to 1,160 tonnes in 2009, with sales totalling 1.7 million dollars.

Thanks to MANA, 526'000 children (126'000 between six months and six years and 400'000 between 6 and 14 years) and 10'000 farmer families benefit from the program. One outcome of the plan has been a reduction in the number of children's deaths caused by malnutrition: between 2004 and 2009, these deaths went from 65 to 17.

MANA was presented at the World Summit on Food Security held in Rome in November 2009 as a unique model. The agreement between the Antioquia administration and the FAO marked a new type of regional cooperation as until 2004 the FAO had only signed agreements with national governments.

4.4. LOCAL PROJECTS OUTSIDE OF NCPS

4.4.1. Local child safeguarding committees in Apurimac in Peru

*Local child safeguarding committees in Apurimac*²⁶ began as part of the activities undertaken by women's grassroots organisations and DEMUNAS.

All these organisations have a shared objective to protect and promote children's rights, based on an integrated approach that also includes the mother's and the family's rights.

Apurimac's local committees have opened the door to participation from the Amerindian community. For this reason UNICEF supports the creation of this type of committee in remote rural areas.

The strategy aims to train the community to take charge of child safeguarding. To take on this new role, community leaders take part in a step-by-step process that combines training workshops and supervised daily safeguarding activities. The result is a team of around five core people who fight for children's and women's rights in each community.

These safeguarding committees are a community service for defending and promoting children's rights in the wider context of respecting human rights. Because of the exclusion of Amerindian communities, the committees have become an

²⁶ <http://www.idl.org.pe/doc/Anexo%209%20SISTEMATIZACION%20MODELO.pdf>

example for promoting women's rights and preventing domestic violence.

They organise and put into place three types of activity:

- *protection (resolving family conflict)*
- *promotion (awareness-raising of children's and women's rights)*
- *monitoring the institutions charged with protecting children's and women's rights.*

31,000 Amerindians living in the Aymaraes province with Quechua as their mother tongue benefit from this project, at no cost to them. Because of economic, geographical, cultural and linguistic factors, they would not normally have access to the judicial system. This intercultural strategy also promotes respect and understanding of Amerindian culture.



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4.4.2. The Magic Carpet: an experience of organisation and advocacy for children in Peru

The Institute for Training Working Children (INFANT), which was founded on a participative approach to information gathering, undertook a project between 2007 and 2009 called the *Magic Carpet*²⁷, where it organised children's groups and training sessions to understand how they see their lives. 150 children under 12 and their mothers (domestic workers and women who had been sexually exploited), living in three areas to the south of Lima took part.

The project's objective is to explore the historical memory of groups of children and in so doing identify their most significant experiences, the friendships they have formed, and team work and events that have taken place.

To meet this objective, social workers divided children into three groups and used 100 photographs taken during the activities. The children were tasked with organising the photos in chronological order of activities and building a narrative based on the photos. Each community's experience developed as follows:

In the *El Salvador* area, the group *Friends forever* worked on the design, affirming their identity and connection to public spaces. As a methodological tool, art became a valuable asset for motivating, planning and carrying out activities.

In the *San Juan de Miraflores* area, children from the group *Empire Kids* developed specific participation and decision-making processes between peers, mothers and partners. Inclusive, authentic and democratic communication, sustained by the affection and friendship between children and partners, deepened the group's reflection on the process.

The idea of the *Magic Carpet* began in this group because, at the start of project, it was very difficult to bring children together to talk and so it was suggested that a carpet be used for sitting on, car-

²⁷ http://www.cepalforja.org/sistem/documentos/sobre_la_alfombra_magica.pdf

rying out activities, and reflecting on and discussing the problems encountered by the group.

In the *Villa Maria del Triunfo* area, the group *Los pequeños peruanos* took on the process of creating a social link between children and the adult world, in particular with the women's organisation *La Flor del Amancaes*. The process of the children making chocolates and visualising objectives facilitated the group's organisation, coordination and self-regulation. The participation of women in children's activities strengthened the organisational process. And the integration of women in the training days has allowed new working relations and new collaborations.

The following conclusions were made by analysing the experience:

- **Social participation.** *Devising projects was the main strategy for training groups seeking social participation in their communities. Training sessions encouraged a genuine connection between children and partners. The obstacles and successes that children identified during their assessments were invaluable when evaluating the project.*
- **Organising children.** *Community organisations play a positive role in training groups of children and run community projects. Joint activities were organised and personal identities strengthened on the basis of emotional connections, confidence and friendship between the different groups involved. The diversity of ages went from being a weakness to being an opportunity for team learning, respect and tolerance of diversity.*
- **Group's identity and development.** *In the three communities, children's organisation and participation was linked to their cultural situation and did not follow a pattern.*
- **Collaboration.** *Partners were guided by an overall strategy adapted to the groups' characteristics, which improved the management of activities, material resources and space and made them more attractive to children. The capacity for empathy and an equal relationship were very important in gaining children's confidence, by moving away from an adult-centred approach essentially based on one person's perspective.*

- **Role of imagination.** *The use of a carpet underlines the importance of imagination as a resource for developing the senses and facilitating children's discussion.*
- **Researchers' role.** *Each group's process shows the researcher's role in fieldwork. It is not a question of collecting data but coming up with ideas and tools to help work towards objectives.*

Criteria for promoting children's organisations. The main characteristic of a children's organisation is their cultural creativity. Children learn to share and value one another by working together and this will be reinforced if children adapt to the workspace and organisation in which they participate. Peer education generated within a children's organisation is not the result of a closed organisation, quite the opposite, interaction with the world of adults is vital to ensure continuous new experiences. The group's identity, collective public action and designing and implementing projects are the main areas of work for developing organisations.

Criteria for promoting active participation. A child's reasoning sets the pace and method of participation in individual and group projects. For children, their rights take on meaning when they are interacting with others and not when they are transferred like impersonal assets. Children's participation has no predefined form; it is influenced by interaction, affection and the specific situation that impacts on a child's subjectivity.

4.5. NATIONAL NETWORKS WORKING IN CHILD PROTECTION



Brazil: Child-friendly President, Child-friendly monitoring network - Fundação Abrinq²⁸

Fundação Abrinq encourages and promotes efforts between government, the private sector and society to make children a priority. In this vein it developed the *Child-friendly President* programme to monitor the government's child-related public policy.

The project includes a network of social organisations called the *Child-friendly monitoring* network that monitors the government's actions for achieving the objectives of the document "A world fit for children", signed by Brazil in 2002 during the UN Assembly. 41 national and international organisations were part of the network that is also supported by the *Sou de Atitude Network*, which involves children from 21 states in Brazil.



Colombia: Alliance for Colombian Children²⁹

This network is made up of 28 organisations including international NGOs, UN agencies, national, regional and local government agencies, universities, children's research centres, watchdogs and individual members.

The Alliance has five workgroups focussed on monitoring, rights to protection, early childhood, social mobilisation, economics and childhood. The early childhood group has become an interdisciplinary workgroup incorporating civil society organisations and international organisations and its main aim is to monitor national early childhood policy.



Peru: National Committee for Children's Rights (CONADENNA)³⁰

CONADENNA is a network that brings together 24 public and private organisations, including local NGOs, international aid organisations and other representatives to take action in promoting the integrated development and defence of children's rights.



Ecuador: Children's forum (FORENNA)³¹

FORONNA is a group which incorporates 100 organisations throughout the country and promotes, raises awareness of and monitors children's rights in Ecuador. FORENNA creates platforms for co-operation and continual discussion with central and local government, protection organisations, NGOs, social movements and the general public, to make sure that children's rights are respected.



Nicaragua: Nicaraguan Federation for Coordinating NGOs that work with children (CODENI)³²

CODENI is a group for coordinating and connecting various civil society organisations, associations, foundations and social movements, and is based on the idea of working as a network to promote, defend and protect children's rights. It has two main instruments, the Children's Rights Watchdog which monitors the implementation and evaluation of public policy and private and community activities and acts on children's rights, and the Research Centre which specialises in issues relating to children.

The effectiveness of these networks is due to a strategy defined by cooperation and equal relationships between members, which allows the social fabric to be strengthened, initiatives to have a greater impact on public opinion, and available resources and the ability of organisations to respond to be increased.

Joining together as a network creates an alliance between government agencies, multilateral organisations, NGOs and local communities. Mutual understanding and recognising the limits of each stakeholder's capacity helps to plan and implement joint projects that contribute to strengthening the alliance.

The successes of existing networks in the different countries analysed show that it is possible to unify efforts and determination and recognise that complementary activities can effectively influence and overcome problems affecting children in poverty.

²⁸ <http://www.fundabrinq.org.br>

²⁹ <http://www.alianzaporlaninez.org.co/>

³⁰ <http://conadenna.org.pe/>

³¹ <http://foronna.org/>

³² <http://codeni.org.ni/quienes>



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5. Conclusions

5.1. COMMUNITY APPROACH

Concepts of *community and community participation* are largely used by NCPS, international organisations and local NGOs but what is the importance of, and the relationship between these concepts? This is why, from the experiences described in this report, we will try to clarify these concepts from a cultural point of view.

The concept of *community* includes two key ideas: a structural dimension and a functional dimension. The notion of structure refers to a defined geographical area, and the functional idea appears in the social and psychological aspects, the objective needs and the shared interests of the group.

In this sense, community is a group of people living in a particular geographical area (village, district, area, municipality, nation, country) who have shared interests and activities and who cooperate formally and informally to resolve problems that affect them all. Community is also based on a feeling of belonging associated with a shared history and shared traditions, customs, standards and symbols.

This *sense of belonging* is vital as it encourages mobilisation, cohesion and cooperation between members of the group. The sense of belonging is linked to cultural identity and comes about as interaction and collaboration between members of the community develop. Part of the process includes searching for their roots and shared past and this allows community members to come to an understanding and idea of their identity as a specific group, different to other communities.

The community's existence depends on a sense of belonging. It is important for giving rise to and supporting the community's development, living together peacefully and defending their values.

Another important aspect of a community's nature is participation, which is made up of individual and collective social processes linked to political, social and cultural forces and which aims to transform relationships of authority. Community participation is essentially the process of intervening in the social forces at play in a developing community and involves various decision-making mechanisms allowing power to be redistributed between the various social parties.

Successful community participation is also a result of leadership and motivation. This is why the support and involvement of external parties, governmental and non-governmental, recognised and valued, play an important role in helping the poorest people gain some control over their own future.

To truly participate, people benefiting from development strategies should be able to access decision-making processes from the start of the project, and be involved in setting priorities, implementing, monitoring and evaluating activities. *Community participation* promotes civil society autonomy relative to the state and direct action in the local action plan. In this sense, community

participation is a process of social decision-making, intervention in and transformation of reality and relationships of power. From this perspective, community participation is a social process of decision making, intervention and transformation of reality that promotes horizontal power relations.

In the context of child protection in Brazil, Colombia, Peru, Ecuador and Nicaragua, there is the existence of a community participation process rich and complex, characterized by the exchange between multiple actors: national governments, multilateral agencies, national and international NGOs, communities and children. In this context, the various child protection actors influence each other and make joint decisions regarding public policies, services, inter-institutional coordination and monitoring of programs

5.2. CHILD PROTECTION MECHANISMS AND PROGRAMMES

The experiences described in this document show that the many mechanisms and programmes for protecting children vary according to the situation in each country, in terms of concept and budget as well as coverage and service quality. However, most mechanisms and programmes are part of NCPS.

In each country there are institutional mechanisms for managing and coordinating NCPS, such as the MDS in Brazil, the ICBF in Colombia, the SNAINA in Peru, the INFA in Ecuador and the MIFAN in Nicaragua. These institutions invest 8,401 million dollars every year in child protection, split by country as follows: Brazil 6,000 million, Colombia 1.650 million, Peru 550 million, Ecuador 165 million and Nicaragua 36 million.

The plans and programmes implemented by these institutional mechanisms are country-wide and 48.2 million children benefit from them including 23 million in Brazil, 12 million in Colombia, 10.5 million in Peru, 2.6 million in Ecuador and 226,000 in Nicaragua.

This study has also shown that there are many community child protection programmes and projects that are not completely part of NCPS. Some of these are national while others are municipal, regional or local.

The high point of all programmes and projects that are separate or relatively separate from NCPS is how they complement NCPS by dealing with issues that are not dealt with or are only marginally addressed by NCPS, such as combating abuse and sexual abuse in the family, restorative juvenile justice and eradicating sexual exploitation.

In terms of protection programmes and projects, national and international NGOs play a leading role in initiating processes of empowerment, learning and adopting best practice in implementing and monitoring programmes and defending communities' rights.

5.3. NCPS PROGRESS

Progress in making life better for children in Brazil, Colombia, Peru, Ecuador and Nicaragua includes:

- **A sensitive, attentive and strong social conscience in all matters concerning children.** Children are no longer invisible, considered indifferently in the eyes of society, adults, politicians and governments. Even though we still live in an adult-centred society, children are now at the heart of legislation, public policy, and political discourse, and on the agenda of the health, education, justice and social protection ministries.
- **A legal system based on the UNCRC.** Children's Codes, developed after 1990 to replace Minors' Codes, have adopted a comprehensive child protection focus, casting aside a distorted view of children. Today, children are seen to have rights and are active participants in these rights. What is more, specific laws against sexual exploitation, child labour and juvenile justice have been adopted.
- **A coordinated network of policy programmes and activities.** National networks and social movements for protecting and promoting children's rights have

been set up through collaboration with multilateral bodies and local and international NGOs.

- **Dissemination of scientific knowledge.** Since the 1980s, studies on children's early development, training, intelligence, learning and psychological development have been disseminated widely. Several publishers now produce books on various subjects concerning children. Virtual networks disseminate information and studies on the situation of children, and postgraduate programmes are common in public and private universities.
- **Improving children's development.** The increase in institutional antenatal care and childbirth has contributed to a reduction in infant mortality. The most significant progress has been seen in a reduction in malnutrition and increase in the coverage of preschool and primary education.
- **Promotion of community participation.** Community participation makes most difference in the areas of preschool education, mother-child health and nutrition. This type of intervention requires direct conversation with communities so educational and health programmes are adapted to the needs and cultural identity of the community. Therefore, beneficiaries from the community are directly involved in children's health and education.

5.4. CHALLENGES IN ACHIEVING COMPREHENSIVE CHILD PROTECTION SYSTEMS

Despite positive progress and changes, national governments, local NGOs and international organisations are faced with a huge challenge - providing an integrated response to the demand for care and protection for 48 million children living in poverty in hugely contrasting economic, social, ethnic and cultural situations. There are still significant differences between organisational discourse and the reality in which disadvantaged children live. Public policy, mechanisms, programmes and the allocation of financial resources to resolve all problems affecting children are still not sufficient. Strengthening and integrating NCPS involves a series of challenges that are addressed below.

- **Overcoming poverty.** *The main challenge in putting into place comprehensive child protection systems is overcoming the social and economic inequalities that are seen throughout the fabric of society, such as inequalities in income, limited access to education and health, unemployment, inequalities in housing conditions and lack of political participation. Children grow up in this world of difference that shapes their ideas, the way they express themselves, their achievements and how they act socially. Overcoming these inequalities, creating opportunities and improving their quality of life are challenges that stretch beyond children's policies. A better world for children should also be a better world for their parents, their communities and their countries.*
- **Providing universal services.** *The large number of children who are poor is beyond belief for those who create protection policies. How do we change the world? According to the UNCRC and national laws, children have the right to life, health, food, a name and a family, education, culture, play, to live in a community, a safe environment, freedom, respect and dignity, protection from oppression, exploitation, abuse and discrimination. It is therefore clear that universal services to ensure that the rights of each child are respected must involve family, government and society.*

- **High quality services.** *Providing quality services in health, education, wellbeing, protection, access to learning, and communication technologies to children living in poverty is a priority for NCPS that requires enormous investment in financial and human resources.*

Adapting to social and cultural changes

- **Family.** *Changes in family structure and family members' roles are a universal phenomenon which has grown in importance over the past fifty years. The definition of 'family' today relates to various configurations recognised by law or seen in daily life and includes the nuclear family, single-parent families, step-families, families with same-sex parents, and children of different fathers etc. In Latin America, in 33% of the families, the woman leads the household, as well as being the mother in charge of attending to the basic needs of the children. It is important to highlight as well that the role of the parents and caretakers are changing. Fathers are now taking upon roles and responsibilities that were previously exclusively assigned to the mothers.*
- **Urbanisation.** *This is a socio-demographic phenomenon which has a massive impact on children's lives and development. Migration from rural areas to urban centres has increased vastly, in particular to seek employment in commerce and the service industries and for educational opportunities, particularly among young people. Consequently, the populations of all towns and cities, whether large or small, are growing. This has led to the creation of shanty towns around the towns and cities where children are more vulnerable.*
- **Intercultural understanding.** *An intercultural dimension, linked to the rights of Amerindian children and children of African descent, is included as a central theme in child protection systems. The aim is to contribute to eradicating racism, discrimination, inequality and intolerance to which millions of indigenous and black children in Latin America have been subjected for centuries.*

- **Socialising children.** Mass communication, in particular children's widespread access to television and the Internet necessitates a rethink of traditional approaches to socialising children. This phenomenon has transformed children's psychological and social perceptions, which is why socialisation today does not take place exclusively within the family or at school, where it traditionally would.
- **Juvenile criminality.** There is currently much debate in the media attributing the wave of insecurity flooding Latin American society to young people, in particular to young people from shanty towns. However, this does not correspond with the real reasons for a rise in criminality among young people; firstly, unemployment, lack of access to education and public health; Secondly, imposed ideas and values (individualism, consumerism, market-driven culture) which leads to thinking that individualism is the only way and that everything happens by chance and not thought joint efforts (a growth in criminality against possessions is by no means surprising in a society that favours irrational consumerism as a measure of social standing); Thirdly, being excluded from decisions concerning their own future.
- **Migration of children.** Current migration flows, both inward and outward, and the causes and repercussions in the countries of origin, transit and destination are a big challenge for governments and in particular for migrants themselves. Around six million people emigrated to other countries in Latin America and the Caribbean and 25 million people emigrated to the USA and Europe. According to the UNHCR, there are three million internally displaced people in Colombia and 53,000 recognised Colombian refugees in Ecuador. According to ECLAC (Economic Commission for Latin America) estimates (2009), one migrant in five is a child, and this does not include the thousands of children who remain in their country of origin after their parents have emigrated.
- **Child participation.** The direct involvement of children in terms of the UNCRC is no longer a central part of the NCPS included in this study and the experiences that do exist are too few and are not documented. It therefore seems that there is little understanding on the suitability of this practice.

Children must be considered as social participants and not only as beneficiaries as they are able to express their opinions and make decisions on issues that concern them in their families, at school, in their neighbourhood, village, municipality and the media. Equally, children's participation should be considered alongside that of adults as a process of mutual learning.

The challenge is to create new areas for children's participation, improve existing ones and open up mechanisms used by adults such as assemblies, community councils and cooperatives so they can learn more about children's issues through open conversation about their interests, knowledge and experiences.



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