Bulletin 13
infancia
June 2022

iin 95 ANNIVERSARY

iin Inter-American Children's Institute

OAS More rights for more people

Bulletin 13

*The Inter-American Institute for Children and Adolescents (IIN) is the Specialized Organization of the Organization of American States in matters of children and adolescents. As such, it assists the States in the development of public policies, contributing to their design and implementation from the perspective of promoting, protecting, and respecting the rights of children and adolescents in the region. Within this framework, the IIN pays special attention to the requirements of the Member States of the Inter-American System and to the particularities of regional groups.*

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# Prologue

*By Víctor Giorgi*

Presenting each edition of the IINfancia Newsletter is highly satisfying. It is an opportunity to show our gratitude to colleagues whose contributions enrich us; an opportunity to set up channels for dialogue, and make available to our readers productions and reflections that broaden our outlook regarding children and adolescents in the Americas. And it represents the achievement of a goal. When six years ago we advanced the idea of a biannual periodical publication containing unpublished articles, it seemed an impossible challenge. Today we can say that we have managed to maintain the regularity of the newsletter by publishing thirteen issues in six years.

But on this occasion, the newsletter is of particular significance to the Inter-American Children's Institute, as 9 June marks the 95th anniversary of its foundation.

Five years ago, in recognition of the significance for the region of the foundation of the IIN, as a milestone in setting up an academic, social and political movement that would take the well-being of American children as its focus of interest, the OAS instituted 9 June as Americas Children and Youth Day.

Anniversaries are times of celebration, and, at the same time, opportunities to reconnect with our roots, take nourishment from them, evoke the history that is part of our identity, and – as our esteemed Eduardo Galeano says – not to "be a port of arrival but a port of departure". It is not a question of venerating or being anchored in the past, but of following the example of our forerunners and face the multiple, complex and shifting challenges that we are confronted with through our Institutional Mission.

The challenge is to promote and protect the rights of children and youth in a region with profound inequities and multiple forms of violence; in which advances in the recognition of and access to rights coexist with regressive initiatives that are presented in different guises, but that converge in their intent to justify exclusion and discrimination, naturalizing inequities and restoring the harshest forms of adult-centrism.

These tensions are manifested day by day in the lives of children and adolescents, and become particularly visible, and, we might say, cruel, in times of crisis such as that triggered by the pandemic and its related effects.

The foundation of the IIN was the result of a long process initiated during the Second Pan American Child Congress held in Montevideo in 1919. On that occasion, the proposal to create "a centre for the study, documentation, consultation and propaganda in the Ameri-

cas of all matters concerning children" was adopted. In its argumentation, the Uruguayan delegation held that "...we need the fullest and most determined cooperation of all institutions, agencies, public offices or individuals, as well as the contributions of men of goodwill, who can somehow deal with the many and varied problems of the child, and in particular, the American child, since our countries have issues that must be resolved taking into account each country's own characteristics and, often, characteristics they have in common; the greater the cooperation of all, the more efficient will the Institute's operations be".

The Institute's place as a regional reference centre, its coordinating role among various actors that converge in the protection of children and the tension between the outlook of the universal child and the peculiarities of American children and their circumstances were thus defined from the outset.

Today, almost one hundred years later, these aspects continue to be the pillars of our institutional identity.

On 9 June 1927, the foundation was finalized and the statutes were adopted, including: "The institute shall issue an official publication entitled: Newsletter of the International American Institute for the Protection of Childhood. This periodical will be published at least every three months. It will include everything related to the Child Protection movement in the countries of the Americas. Laws, regulations, statistics, progress and results of the various institutions shall be recorded. Original papers will be published on the issues concerning […] It will announce major international meetings with their agendas […]."

Therefore, the publication of the Newsletter, with its thematic breadth and diversity of authors and views on the work carried out for children in the Americas is linked to the very constitution of the Institute and to the various ups and downs and reframings that cross-cut its history.

The first issue of the Newsletter was published in July 1927 with an editorial by Prof Luis Morquio, in which the founding act was reported. For most of these 95 years, publication was kept up regularly, with only brief interruptions.

When we celebrated the 89th year of the IIN's existence, we set out to retrieve the regular publication of this communication tool. We intended to open up an opportunity for dialogue and sharing on the situations that currently affect the rights of children and adolescents in the region. As well as on the ethical and political positions on the rights of children in the continent.

In recent decades, there has been progress in recognizing child rights, in including these rights in bodies of law and in investment by the States, all of which has led to stronger protection systems. However, the critical situation we are going through due to the pandemic and other factors has highlighted the structural fragility of these protection mechanisms. Today, the legal, political and social recognition of rights coexists with the withdrawal of the States, the reduction of budgets and the weakening of family capabilities.

We are faced with a perverse equation: greater needs and demands; fewer resources. In this context, we have returned to some of the 'core ideas' that inspired that first foundational feat that gave rise to our organization and that are now being given new meaning by the new perspective on children and their rights.

Today we perceive that children are holders of rights, which do not depend on the generosity of individuals or States, but are specific to human beings "for the mere fact of having been born". These rights constitute a unit; "the realization of them all results in the right to life", as Luis Morquio used to say, giving life a meaning that goes beyond the biological to approach the concept of "good living". The Americanist conception applied to children and youth promotes solidarity beyond national borders, which is none other than the clear perception that together we can do more and do better, because of everything that unites us. We conceive of the Institute as an area for coordination between scientific progress, an ethical positioning of commitment to the rights of children and a political dimension through which transformations become a reality. We reaffirm the conviction that children and adolescents are part of our societies and that their destiny is indissolubly intertwined, thus strengthening the construction of citizenship and cross-generational coexistence. Today we can affirm that these ideas remain in full force and have coalesced with other more recent ones, such as the conviction that the child rights perspective and the gender approach are inseparable from the consolidation and strengthening of democracy, not only as a form of government, but as a style of life that is respectful of the dignity of all, irrespective of differences.

During most of its history the IIN has played a role as coordinator between States, civil society organizations and academia. Today, to this multiplicity of actors are added child and youth organizations, and we have taken on the additional role as a cross-generational bridge in the conviction that the promotion and protection of the rights of children and adolescents must give them a prominent place, and that our work must necessarily be with them.

This 9 June, 95 years later, despite the profound transformations in our ways of seeing, thinking and acting in relation to children, we recover the initiative of that group of men and women who, led by Dr Luis Morquio, proposed, to paraphrase Paco Espínola, to do for the children of America something more than love them.

Víctor Giorgi
Director General - IIN-OAS

# Looking at early childhood from the perspective of teacher training

*By Javier Alliaume Molfino[1]*

This article results from the invitation of the Institute for Children and Youth. It is intended to provide information about early childhood teacher training at the Training and Studies Center (CenForEs) of the Uruguayan Institute for Children and Youth (INAU).

I would like to first thank you for the invitation and state that the following article does not represent the views of the institutions mentioned but those of the author[2].

Although this is a national public policy, we intend to contribute to the reflections and analysis on early childhood, early childhood education, and training policies for early childhood educators.

**CONTEXT AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND...**

Early childhood, as one of the stages in people's lives, has gained visibility in recent decades due to a set of movements and social, cultural, political, scientific, and other factors that are not always balanced or consistent.

Although the notion that what happens to people in their first years doesn't go unnoticed is not new, quite the opposite, a new set of ideas and knowledge stemming from different fields has recently gained more popu-

larity. The findings and knowledge built over the course of many years in the fields of medicine, biology, developmental studies, pedagogy, psychology, sociology, economics, and political science, to mention the most relevant, mean that children in their early years are no longer seen and considered by their family members, caregivers, and the medical field as mere "human cubs»[3] whose needs have to be met solely for survival purposes and little more (Lepold, 2014; Giorgi, 2001). The mass incorporation of women into the labor market unveils the need to find answers to reconcile adult responsibilities, the responsibility to care for those new in the world, and work (or training). Thus, caring for the "newcomers»[4] becomes a matter of concern for the "adult world," for families, but also for those who are responsible for providing answers to social demands, the State, and the market (Midaglia et al., 2014).

As part of a set of transformations that operate dialectically, that influence each other and must be thought and analyzed as part of a whole, these caretaking needs, which are adult-centered, have become more complex, incorporating, at times as a barrier and at times as a driver, the genuine concern for developmental needs (Lobo, 2002; Brazelton and Greenspan, 2005) and, more recently, the rights of (early) childhood (Cunningham, n.d.; Hoyuelos, 2004).

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1 Magister. Teacher. Javier Alliaume Molfino, trainer of early childhood educators, consultant in education and public policies for children. Uruguay.
2 He is a teacher. He took on his teaching role through public exam and merit-based selection process in 2008. Ratified later, in subsequent calls.

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3 In this regard, the author says: "I call human cub (not yet fully human) a non-adult, a new being on which significant educational efforts are vested on for production, reproduction, conservation and transformation of the species" (Antelo, 2005, p. 9).
4 Expression taken from the philosopher Hanna Arendt (e.g. in Arendt, 1996).

Although the institutions in charge of early childhood care, attention, and education arose for reasons associated with the different concerns and interests mentioned above, they are becoming more popular and widespread. The State takes on primarily the responsibility, and private initiatives join in. However, as pointed out in a previous paper (Alliaume, 2018), the policies for creating and expanding socio-educational offerings for early childhood were not duly supported by educator or teacher training policies[5].

Supply and coverage increased throughout the last century, and as of the last decade and up until a couple of years ago, this growth was exponential, with clear peaks and stagnation[6].

These institutions focus on different elements and areas and even have different missions and purposes. As a result of the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Education for All throughout Life movement and other processes described above, education in the first three years of life is now formally considered as a pathway, and it has been included in the General Education Law (2008).

In this way, the recognition of the State is twofold. On the one hand, the educational value of education from birth to 6 years of age, and on the other hand, it divides it into two blocks: Early Childhood from birth to 3 years of age, and Early Education from 3 to 6 (Alliaume, 2009).

Early Childhood Education centers (birth to 3 years) have very different institutional structures and work teams. However, there are ge-

nerally two distinct profiles—although there might be others—within the work teams: Teachers and Educators[7 8].

Although there are female teachers in all the centers who take on the role of educational and institutional leaders, the day-to-day activities, support, and development educational proposal is carried out, in each room/group of children, by male and female educators.

When inquiring about the training and profiles required for the tasks, we find an almost non-existent and rather lax early regulations (2006, 2008), and in many cases diverging opinions in terms of the requirements needed for the role.

As for the training (of Educators), we observed the same gaps, except for some sporadic movements (Alliaume, 2018).

## A NEW PROPOSITION IN TRAINING

TCenForEs, the institution in charge of the education and training of the childhood systems workforce, has taken on the task, building on a few individual initiatives, for example, the courses offered in 1980/90 and as of 1997 in several regions of the country.

Between 1999 and 2001, several initiatives were carried out with the support of Spain through the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation (AECI). These included a model for early childhood care, an educator profile model, and a training for trainers program. A call was issued for people interested in training as educator trainers. After the course was completed, the first team of trainers was arranged based on their resulting ranking

5 A clear exception was the efforts undertaken by Enriqueta Compte y Riqué when she tackled training and the creation of the first public kindergarten simultaneously.
6 For data on coverage and socio-educational offer see Alliaume, 2018. Nowadays, the expansion of the public-state offer is at a standstill, although the government has made certain commitments.

7 The distinction results from the type of education training in place and because in our country and in the region they are conceived as different professions.
8 The feminization, or the near absence of men, is not addressed in this article, although its relevance is noted.

positions, and the first sessions of the Basic Training Course for Early Childhood Educators were launched (AECI-OPP-CENFORES, 2002, pp.11-13).

## DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

TAcross the design and recruitment process and in the organization of the work team, we sought to integrate updated knowledge, national and international experiences, and contributions that were conceptually and methodologically aligned with the socio-educational work with and in early childhood. It is essential to take into account the context. The Convention on the Rights of the Child had just been adopted, and we were just starting to get acquainted with the Spanish, Catalan, and Italian educational experiences.

The training program thus unfolded as a public-state effort and has been in place (with some curriculum changes) since 2000. The program has contributed to the professionalization of educating more workers in the early childhood system.

One of the first distinguishing features is that this program provides in-service training for workers who are already active in such a role. In the vast majority of cases without any specific training and even with limited educational experience.

This characteristic is taken into account, and is pointed out as a second distinguishing feature, as a central aspect in the design and methodological options. Each participant's own practices serve as the material, an object of study, analysis and reflection. Form a methodological standpoint, we work in such a way that people can use their own practices, habits and even their personality as elements to be combined with the conceptual and me-

thodological contributions that are part of the curriculum.

Thus, this training approach follows the principles proposed by authors such as Filloux (1996) and Ferry (1997). This is a core aspect of the program and, as mentioned above, it has an impact on the curricular design and methodological options. It builds on previous knowledge and experience, incorporating the work on representations and perceptions, which derives from the idea of "training as a dynamic of a personal development undertaken by each subject through their own means" (Ferry, 1997, n.p.).

Thus, the self is involved, as it is assumed that the task is undertaken based on the complex patchwork of our past knowledge, experiences, life stories, views, representations, and ideology. By working on one's own practices, the aim is to review them to either enrich or deconstruct them, by analyzing them as an object to be studied, separating them from the place and time in which they are carried out.

Although it is assumed that this training process implies an individual effort and work, the group acts as support and stimulates reflection, in the collective task of reviewing and thinking, in the conceptual articulation and synthesis, in Freire's Freirian sense of praxis: "[...] moving away from the object to admire it. By objectifying, men are able to act consciously on objective reality. This is precisely what human praxis is" (Freire, 1972, p.35).

The group, therefore, allows each member to think and rethink themselves. They also serve as support in a process that is very mobilizing, as it involves, as mentioned before, the person's own being, experiences and practices, and not only their knowledge. According to Frabboni and Pinto Minerva, it is a "dyna-

mic process of "acquiring a certain form", of "forming oneself" and "transforming", as a dimension where the critical-constructive integration of the (intricate and dialectical) education-instruction nexus takes place" (2006, p. 60.) The aim of the training and educational process is not for the person to go through the training program, but rather that the program goes through the person, so he or she is transformed. This is an aim for the group as well.

A fifth element to highlight is that training takes on a certain position, takes sides with a way of understanding the task and the role. It is views as an intersubjective relationship, intertwined with the relationship with the children and their caregivers (Cerutti, 2015). In addition, children are viewed as rights-holders that must be protected by their caregivers. They are beings with capacities and potential to be deployed gradually, taking on increasing levels of autonomy.

A significant part of the training deals with the underlying conceptions about childhood, early childhood education and the role, tasks and functions of educators, present in each of those who are embarked in the training process.

Children are placed in a very particular phase of their development, in the process of becoming a subject, of building subjectivity, of knowing the world and becoming a part of it (Bonifacino, 2014). Someone who needs others to shelter and protect them, to make room for them, to show them the world, to get to know them, understand them and engage in intimate and deep dialogue. Someone who needs to find timely and quality satisfiers to their developmental needs (Lobo, 2006).

The human cub has uncontainable energy, the epistemophilic drive, which forces them to experience everything, to want to learn and as a result of the multiple interactions with other people, objects, spaces, they unfold their genetic potential and learn, developing their capacities, abilities, skills, critical thinking and language.

As for the concept of education, the backbone of training, it is seen as a combination between educating and caring, known early childhood care and education, or more recently as the pedagogy of upbringing (Soto and Violante, 2008).

Educating and caring for people in the early childhood stage means supporting life, but doing so while providing sense to their existence, providing a sense of purpose. It means offering affection and support, human warmth (condition), a life that is enriched and enriches our experience through these relationships, their textures and structures, the objects, words, scenarios and environments we engage with.

This occurs in everyday life, in the sequence of actions and activities, alternating between everyday care practices (feeding, hygiene and sleep), and meeting other developmental needs, such as play, rich experiences with the world, protection from dangers and affection (Lobo, 2002). In this sense, we have overcome the false dichotomy between care giving and educating, between helping and promoting development and learning, under the understanding that those who are new in the world require and demand care based on a particular way of being in the world and existing in it. Care giving practices that, due to their texture and rhythm, make it possible to develop, learn, and build subjectivity (Brailovsky, 2019 and 2020; Violante, 2008; Zelmanovich, 2006).

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## BROADENING THE HORIZON

Building on the experience, and as part of the processes that were undertaken, some of which were already mentioned, the possibility of "a new training proposal for Early Childhood educators at the higher education level is being evaluated to professionalize even further the role of educators, which is currently only available through the Basic Training programs" (CENFORES, 2013).

Thus, the Early Childhood Educator Study Program, which began in 2012, as well as the Basic Training Program, focuses on the specifics of educational practices in the first 3 years.

It is a higher education, open, and public training program. This sets it apart from the program that has been in place for more than a decade. Unlike that program the new one is not in-service training nor is it assumed that the trainees are already involved in the field. Nevertheless, the experience and definitions presented are seen as distinctive features.

## TO CONCLUDE, GOING BACK TO THE TITLE

It is acknowledged that the impacts of the Basic and Technical Training Programs go beyond the training of educators.

Among them, we can observe different notions, approaches and contributions to the development of the early childhood curricular frameworks of 2006 and 2014, and of the Education Law itself (2008), among others.

In turn, by promoting a special understanding and views about people in the early childhood stage of life, considering girls and boys as actors, as social-political beings, active architects of their learning and development, and bearers of rights to be advanced and protected, and by adopting a particular way of understanding education and the role, tasks and functions of educators, we can observe the impacts across different processes.
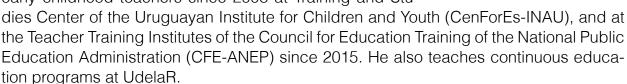
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He is a teacher, holds a Diploma in Social Policies from the University of the Republic (UdelaR) and a Master's degree in Children's Rights and Public Policies from the same University.

He specializes in Early Childhood Education and Care, and has completed postgraduate courses in this area.

He has been a trainer of early childhood educators and early childhood teachers since 2008 at Training and Studies Center of the Uruguayan Institute for Children and Youth (CenForEs-INAU), and at the Teacher Training Institutes of the Council for Education Training of the National Public Education Administration (CFE-ANEP) since 2015. He also teaches continuous education programs at UdelaR.

He was part of the Programmatic Development Team of the Early Childhood Program of INAU, as an expert consultant; and he was also part of the team of the Early Childhood Executive Secretariat of the same institute.

He was a consultant for the Council of Early Childhood and Primary Education (CEIP-ANEP), the International Institute for Educational Planning of UNESCO, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the Latin American Campaign for the Right to Education (CLADE).

In agreement with INAU, he worked as leading teacher in the pedagogical area in an early childhood center, similar to a CAIF, in Ciudad Vieja, for 15 years. He was the founder of the Cooperative that supports it.

He is a member of the Board of Directors of the World Organization of Preschool Education (OMEP) and of the Editorial Board of the Latin American Childhood Magazine (Rosa Sensat Teachers Association). He is a member of the Pikler Uruguay Network, the Network of Specialists in Educational Policy in Latin America of the International Institute for Educational Planning of UNESCO and the Latin American Network of Studies on Teachers' Work.

He has been a speaker at conferences, lectures and workshops both at the national and international level, and he has also coordinated workshops and lectures in his capacity as specialist.

He has published over a dozen articles in national and international specialized journals. He has peer reviewed articles in international journals.

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# The neurodevelopment of indigenous children living in a traumatic community and in conditions of socio-cultural deprivation

By Socorro Alonso Gutiérrez Duarte

## INTRODUCTION

Neuroscience is defined as a set of disciplines that have the purpose of studying the structure of the nervous system and analysing in depth the chemical, pharmacological and pathological function that occurs from the interaction of millions of nerve cells, from a holistic and interdisciplinary perspective. Campos (2012) points out that neuroscience "is beginning to explain how our thoughts, feelings, motivations and behaviour work; and all this as it influences and is influenced by experiences, social relationships, nutrition and the situations in which we live" (p. 12).

Through the multi- and interdisciplinary work that is carried out in the field of neuroscience, one of the most important contributions in the field has emerged, which refers to the accelerated growth of the brain during the early years of life; it is thanks to these findings that we know that in early childhood this growth is faster and more extensive than at any other stage. From birth, the brain of a newborn has millions of nerve cells that begin to connect with each other as a result of the stimuli generated in the environment surrounding the child, making it possible to form a neural network through which nerve impulses travel that "give rise to functional structures in the brain, which will constitute the physiological basis for the psychological formations that allow the conditions for learning to be shaped" (Martínez, 2010, p.16).

Likewise, neuroscientific developments have shown that the neurophysiological bases that will support psychic development are formed in early childhood. Piñeiro and Díaz (2017) point out that "the early years constitute a stage in which the bases for the development of skills, abilities and potentialities are created. These years are key in the development and training of children" (p. 120).

Based on the above, neuroscientists recommend that from an early age children should participate in educational programmes aimed at maximizing development and comprehensive training, since they affirm that the first years are fundamental for human and personality development. Conversely, they hold that starting after the age of four is too late, because the periods of greatest sensitivity of the brain are present during early childhood and a later education must face brain structures that have already been shaped, which hinders the optimal development of the infant. It should be underscored that in addition to the brain having a predetermined genetic and biological influence on its functioning, it is the constant interaction with the environment that consolidates the complex structure of millions of nerve cells. Edelman (1972) showed that the structure of the brain depends more on context and history than on genetic information itself and assigns a priority role to the social context in the development of the brain,

underscoring that the stimuli generated in the environment promote the complex network of nerve cells. At the same time, this network of neurons participates in a process of adaptation characterized by the acquisition of skills, abilities, knowledge, attitudes and a number of functions that will be present throughout life.

This process of adaptation is known as neurodevelopment and is defined as "an evolutionary process resulting from the adaptation of the individual to the environment through patterns of behaviour [...] as a dynamic process of interaction between the organism and the environment, related to the maturation of the nervous system, the development of psychic functions and the structuring of the personality" (Ojeda and Anaya, 2018, p. 61).

In this sense, scientists and specialists maintain that the context must offer adequate stimuli and optimal living conditions that facilitate development and enhance it to its maximum expression, and emphasize that if these conditions are adverse, the development of the child may be permanently altered. Ibañez (2014) uses the term Developmental Disorder Risk and points out that this occurs when there are significant deviations in the course of development that can affect biological, psychological and social evolution.

The specialized literature on child neurodevelopment states that the alterations or delays that occur in development are caused by biological risk factors or social risk factors. Risk factors are "all those factors or circumstances in the life of children that may expose them or lead to physical, mental/intellectual (cognitive), sensory and affective-emotional disorders or alterations, hindering, altering or impeding the development of the evolutionary course appropriate to their chronological age

and the social integration of individuals in their environment" (Ibañez, 2014, p. 25).

In the same sense, studies reveal that the children who exhibit the most serious development issues are those from socially, economically and culturally disadvantaged contexts, which places them in a situation of greater vulnerability. Piñeiro and Díaz (2017) state that "poverty causes inequalities in cognitive and emotional development, affects learning performance and generates long-term negative effects on neurodevelopment and inclusion opportunities" (p. 119).

Dr Pérez-Escamilla (2018) points out that the main risk factors accumulated in poor contexts that affect child development are poverty, nutritional deficiencies, food insecurity, communities with high crime rates and low quality of services, family stress, child abuse and neglect. Likewise, Escamilla (2018) indicates that there are in the world 249 million children under the age of 5 who are at risk of deficient development, which is equivalent to 43% of the child population of that age. He also adds that poor early childhood development varies significantly depending on the economic income of each country.

In The Lancet Early Childhood Development Series: Supporting early childhood development: from science to large-scale application; Dr Pérez-Escamilla (2016) reports that in the Mexican context, 15% of children under the age of four lag behind in their development, and of these, 7% are children under the age of one. The main causes are attributed to malnutrition, family violence, lack of access to education and quality health programmes, in addition to little investment in early stimulation programmes. The effects detected relate to deficiencies in motor, cognitive, language, psycho-emotional and social skills.

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In a study carried out by Gutiérrez and Ruiz (2018), evidence showed that children with a lower level of neurological maturation come from marginalized areas, who live in extreme poverty and who belong to indigenous groups; while children from economically stable families and who live in favourable socio-cultural conditions (education, nutrition, health, housing, affection, etc.) reached the highest levels. These results became a latent concern, since the differences are very significant and levels of maturation are so low that they prompted further studies on the immediate environment of children.

Based on the above, a scientific problem has been designed and is proposed to be the focus of research, in answer to the following question: Which factors jeopardize the neurodevelopment of indigenous children living in the San Andrés de Hidalgo del Parral colony, Chihuahua, Mexico?

The overall aim of this research study is to analyse the biological and social factors that put at risk the child neurodevelopment of indigenous children of the San Andrés colony in Hidalgo del Parral, Chih., in order to identify the problems that most strongly affect it.

## METHODOLOGY

This research study is framed within the interpretative paradigm, with a qualitative approach. The main purpose of this perspective is to interpret the reality and phenomena of a given context. In the understanding that subjects are bearers of a history that decisively influences the development of their personality, it is intended to analyse the context in which infants are born, grow and develop, since it is recognized that "at the moment of birth, a human being is incorporated into a culture, is linked to a socially constituted community and begins the process of humanization or formation of the individual" (Benjumea, 2010, p. 120). This way of cohabiting the world makes sense in the process of understanding the neurodevelopment of indigenous children from 0 to 5 years of age living in the community in question.

A series of dimensions, components and indicators are proposed that guide understanding of the phenomenon holistically (Tables 1 and 2); the research subjects belong to the Tarahumara ethnic group that lives in the San Andrés colony in Hidalgo del Parral, Chih. A number of interviews were carried out with these subjects, as well as observations of the members of the community and their dynamics. In addition, the Child Development Evaluation (CDE) Test was applied to 29 children under the age of 5, whose mothers voluntarily agreed to have their children evaluated, upon personal invitation when visiting them at home.

Table 1

**Conceptual and operational definition of the dimensions to be investigated**

| Dimension | Concept | Operationalization |
|---|---|---|
| **Biological factors** | Situations that are limited to the prenatal, perinatal and postnatal periods that a child has lived or is living and that may predispose to a delay in development. | Information is obtained through interviews with the children's mothers or main caregivers, on the basis of the CDE's biological risk factor questionnaire, and on that basis, the answers are analysed in greater depth. |
| **Environmental factors** | Social conditions in the immediate environment in which the child interacts; socio-economic, psychological and cultural conditions are taken into account. | Data are collected by observing the community and interviewing mothers and members of the community. |
| **Child development** | This refers to the evaluation of children's development, according to evolutionary processes, to determine if development is normal, delayed or at risk of delay. | The CDE test is applied, taking into account the criteria established therein. |

Source: The author.

Table 2

**Conceptual definition of components**

| Dimension | Component | Concept |
|---|---|---|
| **Biological factors** | Prenatal | Disorders or pathologies affecting the foetus from pregnancy to before birth |
| | Perinatal | Issues that arise during childbirth, such as birth weight, nuchal cord, hospitalization and its causes, height, etc. |
| | Postnatal | This refers to the living conditions of the newborn. |
| **Environmental factors** | Socio-economic factors | Refer to the social and economic situation of the child's family that may or may not ensure healthy and adequate food, quality of life, clothing, housing, social security, etc. |
| | Psychosocial factors | The affective processes are observed; security, trust, self-esteem, which affect intellectual, social and language development. The family. |
| | Cultural factors | Transmission of cultural values of the Rarámuri ethnicity such as language, origins, roots, dress, etc. Also observed are the habits acquired in the community related to customs of the community itself, as regards leisure, rest, play, alcoholism, drug addiction, etc. |
| **Child development** | Areas of development | Evolutionary process as appearing in the areas of development (fine motor, gross motor, language, social and knowledge) according to the milestones for each age. |
| | Warnings | Set of signs and symptoms that in the absence of another alteration may follow a deviation from the normal pattern of development |
| | Red flags | Clinical expression of a probable delay or deviation from the normal pattern of development; not absolute evidence of a neurological or developmental delay, and indicate the need for an in-depth evaluation of the child. |
| | Neurological examination | Set of signs that make it possible to determine the integrity and maturation of the nervous system, among which are considered the cephalic perimeter, alteration in body mobility and eye movements and facial symmetry. |

**Source: The author**

Once the information was obtained through the research methodology, the process of triangulation of the data and their systematization was carried out, which allowed the construction of the following categories of results.

## A. TRAUMATIC COMMUNITY

A *traumatic community* is defined as the context that brings together a set of social, historical and cultural sufferings that plunge individuals into dynamics that do not contribute to their harmonious and comprehensive development; the traumas are caused by extreme poverty, social inequality, discrimination, lack of quality educational, work and social security opportunities, loss of ethnic values and roots, food shortages, alcoholism, drug addiction, among many other sufferings that have taken root and that community members reproduce unconsciously.

A traumatic community, therefore, refers to an area that puts at risk the comprehensive development of its inhabitants, mainly those under 5 years of age, since early childhood is the stage when the bases for the individual's further development are structured. The evolutionary and maturation features of early childhood cause children to be vulnerable individuals, one hundred percent dependent on an adult's care; if to this factor are added adverse socio-cultural conditions such as poverty, child abuse, discrimination because they belong to indigenous groups, poor nutrition and malnutrition, lack of health services and sanitation, and no social security, among other factors, then the situation and human condition of children is even more alarming.

The data analysed have allowed us to conclude that the San Andrés colony is a traumatic community that groups together a set

of historical and cultural social sufferings, which puts at latent risk the families that live in it. Some of the more salient sufferings and traumas found are: (1) Subhuman dwellings, mostly made of paperboard and without any basic services; (2) Extreme poverty of 100% of the population; (3) Serious food problems; (4) Low social dynamics, cooperation and participation of members of the community; (5) High rates of alcoholism and drug addiction among young people and adults in the community; (6) Loss of cultural values of the Tarahumara ethnic group; and (7) Serious health and hygiene problems among both individuals and the community. In addition to the above, the acts of inequality, social exclusion and discrimination that they face on a daily basis are visible, which translates into behaviours leading to low life expectancy.

## B. CHILD DEVELOPMENT LAG AS A CONSEQUENCE OF SOCIO-CULTURAL DEPRIVATION

PSocio-cultural deprivation is understood as the set of circumstances that hinders the cognitive, physical, emotional, and/or social development of those who live in conditions of poverty – financial as well as cultural – conditions that give rise to personalities with low life expectancy, with few opportunities for personal, academic, and labour growth.

Of the 29 children evaluated, 8 exhibited normal development; of these, the gestation of 5 children was to term in a range of 38 to 41 weeks, and in only one of the five cases did the mother experience complications, a pregnancy considered by the doctor as high risk due to high blood pressure. The other 3 with normal development, were premature babies born at 34, 35 and 36 weeks of gestation; it should be noted that the three mothers stated that they consumed alcohol and tobacco

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during pregnancy, and in addition they experienced complications such as infections and high blood pressure.

In the group of children at risk of developmental delay there were only two cases; the first child has gross motor skills problems, since he is unable to perform the activities established for his age range or those of the previous age group; and the second child exhibits a red flag: the child is 16 months old and is still unable to stand. Gestation in both cases was 40 weeks, they breathed at birth, the age of the mothers was 24 and 29 years respectively, they are married and one of them did not go to school while the second reached the secondary level. Upon being interviewed, they stated that they did not use any type of drugs.

With regard to children who lag behind in their development, we should note that this is the group with the greatest number of children; that is, 19 of the 29 evaluated, which represents 65.5%. In an interview with the mothers, it was possible to determine that ten of them consumed alcohol, tobacco and/or some other type of drug, representing 52.6% of this population. Of these ten mothers, eight of them had preterm births ranging from 31 weeks of gestation to 36, and six of them said they had had complications related to infections, high blood pressure, bleeding, etc. One of the mothers said she did not remember having had complications, mentioned that she had learned of her pregnancy when she was 25 weeks pregnant, at a time when she was inhaling the substance Resistol, and that her baby had been born at 32 weeks.

Another of the significant data is that of the 10 mothers who consumed alcohol and/or tobacco and/or other type of drug, 6 of them have no schooling, 2 finished primary school, 1 finished senior high school and another is currently attending high school. The ages of mothers who did not attend school are: one is 27 years old; three are 34 years old; one is 36 years old, and one is 40. These data allow us to deduce that the longer the school attendance, the lower the chances of consuming some type of drug, as is the case with the 9 mothers who stated that they did not consume alcohol, drugs or tobacco, and of whom six had finished high school and three had finished senior high school. Therefore, education represents an invaluable element in the formation and development of the personality.

## CONCLUSION

The colony is considered to be a traumatic community, since within it converge a set of social, historical and cultural sufferings that plunge individuals into dynamics that do not contribute to harmonious and comprehensive development; the traumas are caused by extreme poverty, social inequality, discrimination, lack of quality educational, work and social security opportunities, loss of ethnic values and roots, food shortages, alcoholism, drug addiction, inadequate housing, among many other sufferings that have taken root and that community members reproduce unconsciously. This reproduction is in keeping with the adaptation process adopted by members of the community.

A traumatic community, therefore, refers to an area that puts at risk the comprehensive development of its inhabitants, mainly those under 5 years of age, since early childhood is the stage when the bases for people's further development are structured and their personality is determined.

The assessment of child development makes it possible to identify the level reached so far.

However, so long as better living conditions fail to be promoted and the deep-rooted social dynamics do not change, these practices are likely to continue to be reproduced. Change requires a process of awareness-raising, but unfortunately, the priority is to satisfy the most pressing needs; as long as there is hunger among the members of the community nothing will be more important than looking for food; when food, and economic and labour stability improve, there will be a possibility of looking towards new horizons, otherwise, traumatic communities and socio-cultural deprivation will continue to exist.

With this analysis, the possibility is left open for the design of community intervention projects, with the participation of the main actors of the community and its institutions: schools and families, without disregarding institutions interested in improving the living conditions of those who inhabit them, since we fully believe that by overcoming these traumas, children in early childhood will grow up in a favourable environment, which will contribute to the development of their personality.

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# Early childhood public policy and inequality in Argentina
## Lines for reflection

*By Cecilia Del Bono y Claudia Castro*

There is a general consensus on the importance of States investing in and implementing policies and programmes for early childhood. Early childhood is a critical stage in people's physical, psychological and social development. Scientific evidence (neuroscience, psychology, economics, among other disciplines) holds that cognitive, linguistic and social abilities develop in the early years of life and form the basis for later and lifelong learning. Therefore, everything that is achieved during this stage will last forever and what is not achieved will give rise to various barriers in people that will make it difficult to achieve the full development and performance of their capabilities. Because of this, all children should receive opportunities that will enable them to lead a full life and enjoy their rights. Ensuring access to a social protection system from the outset can make a difference in achieving the full development of children.

### WHY INVEST IN EARLY CHILDHOOD POLICY?

There are several arguments arising from social and medical science, which highlight the importance of moving towards policies for early childhood. The main argument derives from the rights-based approach, which recognizes children as holders of rights in the fullest sense and with the right to the full development of their potential.

Another argument is related to the fact that investing in early childhood has positive effects on gender equity, since it contributes to promoting the reintegration of women into employment (Aulicino, Cano, Díaz Langou and Tedeschi, 2013). All of which involves combining modifications in the distribution of tasks between men and women in the home, with very strong collectivization through public services provided by the State, community and, to a lesser extent, the market.

Neurology, developmental paediatrics and psychology, for their part, maintain that the first years of life are essential for the biological, psychological, cultural and social development of the child. Multiple studies show that 40% of the mental abilities of adults are formed in the earliest years of life (Araujo and López-Boo, 2010). Early stimulation contributes to developing more neural connections and a greater development of children's cognitive functions (Heckman, 2006).

From the economic point of view, it is argued that human development is the basis of countries' social capital and economic development and that investing in the comprehensive development of children is necessary for countries to grow economically in an equitable and sustainable manner. Early childhood investment has high rates of return, in terms of the future profitability of society as a whole, of up to USD17 per USD1 invested (UNICEF, 2010; Alegre, 2013).

Finally, there is also a demographic argument that suggests that Argentina is at a stage called 'demographic bonus'[1], which will only

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1 The demographic bonus is the period in which the economically active population is greater than the non-productive population. That is, few children, few older adults and many people working.

last 30 years; hence, it is essential to invest in early childhood since it is the strategy to equip the new generations with skills and resources so that they can be more productive in the future (Filgueira and Aulicino, 2015).

**EARLY CHILDHOOD AND INEQUALITY**

The situation of children in early childhood shows inequities and significant gaps in socio-economic and territorial terms and in access to services.

The latest available data indicate that the population of our country is just over 45.3 million. According to population projections, in 2020, children and adolescents represent approximately one third of the population and within this group it is estimated that children between 0 and 6 years of age number approximately 5.2 million (Basch et al, 2015).

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Income-only child poverty reached 51.4% in the second semester of 2021 (INDEC). Of this total, 38.8% are poor while 12.6% are destitute. The incidence of poverty increases significantly in relation to the variables of education level and working condition of the adult in charge. If the dwelling is located in a slum or working-class district, it is estimated that poverty affects 9 out of 10 children (UNICEF, 2020). The population between the ages of 0 and 17 is the most affected by multidimensional poverty: 5.7 million (43.6%) are affected by non-monetary deprivation and 2 million (15.3%) by severe deprivation. According to UNICEF, the COVID-19 pandemic caused the gap to widen and increased inequality between households with and without children. With regard to the structural conditions of poverty, 10% of the Argentine population lack access to drinking water and 30% of households lack access to the public sewage system. The deficit is much higher in marginal

strata, where 17% have no access to running water, while 42% reside in dwellings without a connection to the sewage network. While 35% of households do not have access to mains gas.

In Argentina, the schooling of 5-year-olds is close to being considered universal (97.7%) (UNICEF and SAP, 2019), while 83% of 4-year-olds, 45% of 3-year-olds and 11% of 2-year-olds attend early schooling. However, these levels of access become uneven between provinces and between urban and rural sectors. According to the 2010 National Census, only 36% of children aged 3 and 4 in rural areas attend any kind of early education facilities. In addition, according to MICS data, 19% of children attend education and care facilities between the ages of 0 and 3. Although the evolution of the provision of early education and care facilities has expanded in recent years, it remains insufficient (FLACSO and UNICEF, 2020).

With regard to health, although there has been a steady decline in infant mortality rates (IMR) since 1980, maternal, child, adolescent and women's health outcomes are still unsatisfactory in some regions of the country. The maternal mortality rate – maternal deaths over live births – was 4.1 per 10,000 live births. The child mortality rate for children under the age of one was 8.4 per thousand in 2020. The distribution of mortality in Argentina is also very uneven: a newborn or a pregnant woman residing in the Patagonian region or in the City of Buenos Aires are more likely to live than those residing in the regions of the Northwest of Argentina (NOA, for its acronym in Spanish) and the Northeast of Argentina (NEA). The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on vaccination coverage was very significant across all age groups. In 2020, there was an average decrease of 10 points in national vaccination coverage of all vacci-

nes compared to the 2015-2019 average. In 2020, no vaccine in the National Vaccination Calendar exceeded 80% coverage (SAP – UNICEF, 2022).

The standard of living of girls, boys and their families is associated with the provision of income that makes their upbringing possible, and this is linked, in turn, to the policy of monetary transfers. Of the 13 million children under the age of 18, 33.1% receive Universal Child Allowance (AUH, in Spanish), 29% receive Family Child Allowance (AFH), 22.2% receive monetary support through income tax deductions, and 10.5% benefit from non-contributory provincial programmes. Thus, 4.3% of girls and boys receive no type of transfer at all, either because they are excluded by the regulations, owing to registration difficulties that prevent identifying the adult in charge or because of issues related to compliance with conditions and their certification (CNPS, 2022).

**PUBLIC POLICIES FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD**

Since our country ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in 1990, many laws have been enacted that recognize the rights of children in their early childhood.

In 2005, Law N° 26,061, the Comprehensive Protection of Child Rights Act was issued, bringing its articles into line with the principles of the Convention. This law recognizes the child as a holder of rights, the State as having a duty to ensure its effective fulfilment and the family as having the primary responsibility for ensuring the full enjoyment and exercise of the rights of the child. Among the rights recognized are the right to life (art. 8); the right to an identity (art. 11); the right to comprehensive health (art. 14); the right to

free public education (art. 15); and the right to social security (art. 26).

In order to safeguard the right to a decent standard of living, to health and education and to lessen the predicaments caused by family expansion and, consequently, the costs of reproduction (Arcidiacono and Gamallo, 2020), Law 24.714/96 on Family Allowances provides for monetary transfers for workers in a dependency relationship. These benefits are prenatal allowance, maternity allowance, family allowance for a disabled child, family allowance providing annual school assistance, family allowance for birth or adoption.

With regard to the right to health, we should mention Law N° 24,540 on the system for the identification of newborns (1995); Law N° 26,743 of 2012, which recognizes every individual's fundamental human right to the recognition of their gender identity; Law N° 25,929 on respectful labour and childbirth, of 2004, which stipulates that newborn children have the right to be treated in a respectful and decent manner; the National Food Security Plan, which allows access to complementary and sufficient food for the socially vulnerable population, and Law N° 25,724, the National Nutrition and Food Programme of 2002 that aims to cover the nutritional requirements of children up to the age of 14, promoting exclusive breastfeeding up to 6 (six) months of age and the development of early stimulation activities for children from 0 to 5 years who have been neglected or who belong to at-risk families.

In 2006, Law N° 26,206 on National Education was enacted, recognizing the early levels as a pedagogical unit and determining the educational organization of nursery centres for children from 45 days to 2 years of age; and kindergartens for children from 3 to 5 years of age. In 2014, Law N° 27,045 was enacted;

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it stipulates the compulsory nature of education as from the age of 4 and the obligation to universalize educational services for children 3 years of age, prioritizing educational care in the most disadvantaged sectors of the population. In addition, in 2007, Law N° 26,233 on the promotion and regulation of child development centres was adopted, regulating the provision of comprehensive care for children up to the age of four who are not in the formal education system. This law aims to provide adequate care for early childhood, complementing families' parenting, based on a preventive, promotional and restorative function regarding rights.

In line with the body of legislation, the State, through various agencies, has implemented policies and programmes aimed directly or indirectly at early childhood. In general, we can affirm that the most prominent feature has been the interventionist nature of the State and its role in levelling inequalities, through redistributive policies and an increase in social investment.

Below we list the policies implemented in the areas of health, education and protection, which have represented a milestone in the treatment of early childhood in Argentina.

Argentina has one of the most comprehensive vaccination schedules in the region. 18 are compulsory and free vaccinations, 11 of which are applied between birth and the age of 12 months in the country's vaccination centres, health centres and public hospitals.

The launch of the Universal Child Allowance (AUH) in November 2009 (Decree No. 1602/09) modified the system of contributory family allowances for registered workers, extending the benefit to the children of unemployed persons, informal workers and, in 2016, also to the children of single tax payers. In this way, the AUH can be thought of as an important step in the universalization of access to minimum standards of protection. The AUH is the responsibility of the ANSES and grants a monthly non-refundable monetary benefit that is paid to one of the parents, or guardian, for each child under the age of 18 who is in their care – without a limit on the number of children – or for each child with no age limit in the case of disability. The AUH demands compliance with certain conditions: school attendance and the mandatory vaccination schedule for children. Subsequently, in April 2011, the National Executive Branch, through Decree 446/11, extended coverage to pregnant women (Pregnancy Allowance for Social Protection).

In 2020, the National Congress adopted Law N° 27,611, the National Act on Comprehensive Health Care and Care during Pregnancy and Early Childhood, which establishes an extra annual allocation for Comprehensive Health Care, in the same amount as the Universal Child Allowance to help care for each child under the age of three (1000 days). It also provides for the public and free provision of essential supplies during pregnancy and for early childhood, coordinating and expanding existing programmes, and the creation of the Early Birth Warning System and the Certificate of Life Events in order to guarantee the right to identity of newborn girls and boys.

The National Secretariat for Children, Adolescents and the Family (SENNAF) operates the Under-Secretariat for Early Childhood (SSPI), which is responsible for implementing the National Early Childhood Plan (Decree No. 574/16), whose objective is to promote and strengthen care and a comprehensive approach for children from 45 days to 4 years. At present, agreements have been reached with around 2,400 early childhood

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centres throughout the country, where it is estimated that about 168,000 children attend. SENNAF also implements the National Early Years Programme – Support for Parenting – which emphasizes the strengthening of parenting practices by training facilitators on child development issues, so that they can provide support to families through visits to homes or community meetings.

The Infrastructure Programme for Child Development Centres (Resolution 59/21) is a programme implemented jointly by the Ministry of Public Works and the Ministry of Social Development that seeks to expand the offer of Early Childhood Areas and/or Child Development Centres (CDI) through new buildings and extensions of existing areas, and improve their quality standards.

**UNRESOLVED CHALLENGES**

Although the Argentine State has made progress in the development of policies aimed at early childhood, enormous challenges still remain today. In recent decades, much progress has been made in institutionality (laws, regulations) and in the increase in policies and programmes aimed at early childhood, but with a limited comprehensive approach that considers the areas of health, education, care and protection, among others.

As a general reflection, we believe that the current debate and the challenges of public policies aimed at early childhood should revolve around the following focal points/aspects:

*1. Universality and quality of benefits:*
Monetary transfers and universal policies are a valuable tool available to the State to reduce social inequalities. However, at present, in some of the benefits we are witnessing a frag-

mented (Duhau, 1997) or stratified (Filgueras, 2013) universalism that is not sufficient to safeguard the rights of children whose families are in the informal sector or belong to vulnerable sectors of the population.

In relation to the quality of early childhood care and education services, coverage and infrastructure, equipment and human resource training should be improved by means of a system that identifies, selects and integrates the multiple and heterogeneous existing training proposals. A system should be devised to provide initial training and continuous education, with support in the territory, aimed at improving the skills of personnel in direct contact with children.

*2. Policy comprehensiveness challenge (inter-agency, cross-sectoral and inter-jurisdictional coordination).*
In order to ensure that the public policies implemented are comprehensive, cross-sectoral work must be carried out. Cross-sectoral and inter-jurisdictional coordination should be strengthened in order to implement comprehensive policies that foster full growth with an equity-based approach. Coordination in a federal country must take place in the territory and at the different levels of government, with the municipal level being understood as that which carries out direct interventions with children.

Although in some provinces it is possible to observe the establishment of areas where there is inter-agency synchronization (provincial and local boards for early childhood, for example), it is still insufficient in the sense of including civil society actors committed to early childhood issues. It is still necessary to coordinate with non-governmental organizations, social organizations and movements, universities, companies and academic and research centres, among others.

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A condition for this cross-sectoral feature to be effective is the strengthening of the capacities of local and provincial technical teams that are linked to or are responsible for the management and implementation of public policies aimed at this age group (health, education, social development, protection, among others). There is a need to train specifically in policy coordination mechanisms.

*3. Challenges in implementing policies and programmes*
Implementing a public policy implies putting in place a series of institutional, administrative, financial and operational mechanisms. Improving the technical capacity and communication between the bureaucracies of the different areas of the State that are involved in the implementation process, as well as generating evidence and information systems in order to evaluate progress and results are central actions that are necessary in order to increase their impact.

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# The Right of the Child to Spiritual Development
## A holistic approach to children's well-being

*By María Lucía Uribe Torres*

The holistic development of children is a *sine qua non* for their well-being and for them to become thriving adults.  A holistic approach to child development is inclusive of children's physical, social, cognitive, emotional and spiritual aspects.  It honors the intrinsic value of the child, their dignity and capacity to develop not just physically and cognitively but also in relation to others, to nature and to that which they might refer as God, Ultimate, Transcendent or Divine.  It allows children to develop fully their sense of belonging, purpose and collective responsibilities as members of a global community.

Article 27 of the Convention of the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1989)[1] recognizes the right of every child to a standard of living adequate for their own physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development.  Similarly, Article 17 states that children must have access to information and material "especially sources aimed at the promotion of his or her social, spiritual and moral well-being and physical and mental health."  The Convention supports the holistic development of the child and protection of all domains of life as a critical aspect for children's well-being. It does not compartmentalize their development but sees it holistically as a critical part of creating the conditions for children to uphold principles and ethical values that allow them to live peacefully with others.  It is with this purpose that Article 29 acknowledges the role of

education in helping children to develop a "responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin."

Article 29 provides a substantive understanding of the aims of education, particularly in ensuring the holistic development of the child.  General Comment No 1 (Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2001)[2] emphasizes that the aims of education are:  The holistic development of the full potential of the child (29 (1) (a)), including development of respect for human rights (29 (1) (b)), an enhanced sense of identity and affiliation (29 (1) (c)), and his or her socialization and interaction with others (29 (1) (d)) and with the environment (29 (1) (e)).  This provides a comprehensive framework that affirms, supports and promotes the inherent dignity of the child and holistic well-being.

This vision of education promotes not only cognitive development but also skills, attitudes and values to learn to live together with others, strengthening children's identities, their relations with others and the environment, and their respect for one another.  The Report to UNESCO of the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century: Learning: The Treasure Within (Delors, 1996)[3], speaks about four pillars of edu-

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1 United Nations.  General Assembly resolution 44/25.  *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (1989) https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/convention-rights-child

2 Committee on the Rights of the Child. *General Comment No 1* (2001).  CRC/GC/2001/1, 17 April 2001. Article 29 (1):  The aims of Education. https://www.unicef-irc.org/portfolios/general_comments/GC1_en.doc.html

3 Jaques Delors,  *Learning: The Treasure Within.* International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century (1996)

cation: Learning to Know, Learning to Be, Learning to Do and Learning to Live Together. All of them complementary and important, presenting a holistic and integrated vision of education that allows children to thrive in societies that are increasingly plural, globalized and that require individuals with a higher sense of purpose, shared humanity and commitment to building better, more inclusive and peaceful societies.

Often when people refer to holistic development they exclude the spiritual aspect, with the fear of being associated to the promotion of religious instruction. There is often a misunderstanding about the right to spiritual development to be related to religion. The child's right to spiritual development is not necessarily the same as religious development nor it is a synonymous with the right to religious freedom, that affirms in Article 14 that States Parties shall respect the right of the child to freedom of thought, conscience and religion. Children are granted the right to spiritual development both within the framework of a given religion (Sturla Sagberg, 2017)[4] and outside the boundaries of a religious affiliation. Therefore, the right to spiritual development is not subject to belonging to a religious community or not. A part of supporting the spiritual development of children requires providing opportunities for children to develop their agency, their capacity to make well-grounded decisions and to choose. Spiritual development, hence, contributes to the protection of religious freedom as well as to learning and respecting people of different religious and non-religious beliefs.

It is also important to underline that spirituality is not confined only to religion or to religious people; it refers to the connection and relation with the self, with others, with nature, and with that which is referred as God, the Divine, the Transcendent, or Ultimate Reality. A spirituality that connects these multidimensional relationships helps children to be grounded in their sense of self and helps them connect to their roots. It builds a sense of belonging, strengthens children's identity, ethical values, prosocial behaviors, and positive relations with others. It also lifts children up to develop a sense of purpose and meaning around who they are, what they do, where they live and what children are meant to be and want to become. The holistic development of children encompasses the possibility for children to develop their own spirituality as expressed in these multi-dimensional relationships.

Despite the lack of recognition and understanding of the right to spiritual development, this aspect has been foundational for children's rights. The first declaration of children's rights, commonly known as "Declaration of Geneva," adopted in 1924 by the League of Nations, composed of five articles, clearly stated in Article 1 that "The child must be given the means requisite for its normal development, both materially and spiritually" (League of Nations, 1924)[5]. Later on, the Declaration of the Rights of the Child (United Nations, 1959)[6], set as one of its 10 principles that "The child shall enjoy special protection, and shall be given opportunities and facilities by law and by other means, to enable him to develop physically, mentally, morally, spiritually and socially in a healthy and normal manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity. In the enactment of laws for this purpose, the best interests of the child shall be the paramount consideration." This point indicates that by recognizing children's rights, the spiritual cannot be separated from the physical, mental, social or moral. The paragraph is a

4 Sturla Sagberg, *Taking a children's rights perspective on children's spirituality*. International Journal of Children's Spirituality (2017) 22:1, 24-35. DOI: 10.1080/1364436X.2016.1276050

5 Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child http://www.un-documents.net/gdrc1924.htm
6 United Nations. Declaration of the Rights of the Child. Proclaimed by General Assembly resolution 1386 (XIV) of 20 November 1959.

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holistic expression of children's development (Sturla Sagberg, 2017)[7].

## UNDERSTANDING SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT

The spiritual development of the child is a central part of full, sound and holistic development, as mentioned before; it is interconnected with other developmental domains. Spiritual development should neither be confused with mental or moral or social development, nor be separated from those aspects of a child's life. It contributes to children's social and emotional well-being, as it strengthens relations with self and others and prepares children to become more empathic with the needs of other people.

Spiritual development can be understood "in part, as a constant, ongoing, and dynamic interplay between one's inward journey and one's outward journey." Research conducted with adolescents shows that it involves at least three core developmental processes (Search Institute, 2019)[8]:

(a) Being aware of the strengths, wonder, and beauty both within the self and the world in ways that cultivate meaning, identity, and purpose;

(b) seeking and experiencing significance and interdependence in relationships with others or transcendent figures (God or a higher power) that provide meaning to life over time; and

(c) authentically expressing one's values, passions, and identity through activities, practices and relationships that promote a sense of inner wholeness and harmony.

These elements indicate that the spiritual development of children is closely related to their ethical development, understood as their capacity to positively relate to themselves and others, from a perspective of an ethics of care that conceives caring for other human beings as if we held the life of the "other" in our hands. The spiritual development of children contributes to strengthen children's sense of interconnectedness with others. This interconnectedness places emphasis on the values of human solidarity, empathy, human dignity, and the humanity of every person, all of which are central to the spiritual development of children (International Consortium on Nurturing Values and Spiritual Development in Early Childhood, 2022)[9]. Longitudinal studies in adolescents have shown connection between moral competency and spirituality in predicting adolescents risky and problem behavior. Spirituality enhanced moral development and provided essential protective factors that decreased the likelihood of problem behavior by providing the children with an essential moral foundation and sense of purpose (Shek & Zhu, 2018)[10].

Undeniably, positive social relationships are a key contributor in well-being, as these relationships greatly influence children's mental and physical health (Harris, 2007)[11]. Studies have shown that often children with poor peer and familial connections experience higher rates of depression, loneliness, low self-es-

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7 Sturla Sagberg, 2017, 28

8 The Center for Spiritual Development in Childhood & Adolescence (2008) With Their Own Voices, A Global Exploration of How Today's Young People Experience and Think About Spiritual Development. Search Institute

9 International Consortium on Nurturing Values and Spiritual Development in the Early Years (forthcoming 2022), Toolkit on the Spiritual Development of Children in the Early Years for the Prevention of Violence and Children's Well-being, forthcoming. The Consortium, convened by Arigatou International, brings together civil society and faith-based organizations, religious communities, multilateral organizations, academia, and individual experts to foster collaboration, share good practices, develop evidence-based and innovative approaches to integrate values-based education and spirituality in early childhood for the prevention of violence and the holistic development of children.

10 Shek, D. T. L., & Zhu, X (2008) Self-reported risk and delinquent behaviour and problem behavioural intention in Hong Kong adolescents: The role of moral competence and spirituality *Frontiers in Psychology,* 9, 1-17. DOI: 10.3389/fpsyg.2018.00430

11 Harris, K. I. Re-conceptualizing spirituality in the light of educating young children. *International Journal of Children's Spirituality,* 12(3), 263-275 (2007). DOI: 10.1080/13644360701714936

teem, and poor well-being (Gulay, 2011)[12]. The role of parents, caregivers and family in nurturing children's spiritual development is paramount to help them grow as thriving adults who can uphold positive relationships with themselves and others.

To foster children's spiritual development, particularly from the early years, three elements may play a critical role: Fostering environments that are free of violence and promote children's agency; relationships with parents, caregivers and significant others that promote positive attachment and strengthen children's self-awareness, self-esteem, trust and children's capacity to build positive relations with others; and, empowering experiences, whereby children have the opportunity to experience nature, learn to embrace diversity and their own spiritual traditions, empathize with others, to make decisions, uphold individual and collective responsibilities, and discover their sense of purpose and meaning (International Consortium on Nurturing Values and Spiritual Development in Early Childhood, 2022)[13].

A critical aspect of children's spiritual development is their participation in their own spiritual growth by exercising freedom of expression, of choice and to explore, as well as to speak up on issues that affect them. Child participation is seen as a significant protective factor against forms of violence, and as enabling children to develop their own sense of their being, belonging, and becoming dimensions in an age-appropriate way.

## SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT AND THE RIGHT TO PROTECT CHILDREN FROM VIOLENCE

Violence against children not only violates children's physical and emotional well-being but also their spiritual safety and development, as it breaks their connection with others and their sense of trust and respect for other human beings. We know through the Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1988)[14] that it is through positive interactions with significant others early in life, a child develops a sense of self, a sense of others, and a sense of the nature of the relationship between themselves and the world, as well as their understanding of God, the Divine or the Transcendent.

Safety and nurturance during early years allows for the flourishing of the child and increases the likelihood of a thriving adult with healthy self-concept and attachments. However, when early trauma occurs, children are less likely to have positive views of themselves and others and will often expect rejection and maltreatment from those around them. As a result, the individual's ability to connect and interact positively with those in his or her environment is compromised (Prior & Petra, 2019)[15].

One critical contributor to children's ethical development and their capacity to make positive and well-grounded decisions is the diverse life experiences that the person goes through, particularly adverse situations. Violence, abuse and maltreatment have a negative impact on brain development; the brain is where morals and decision-making are processed, and therefore, affects children's capacity to engage positively with others and regulate their emotions. Research has found that children who experienced maltreatment or witnessed domestic violence in childhood

12 Gulay, H (2011) The self-perception, social impact, social preference and peer relations of Turkish children between the ages of five and six. E*arly Child Development and Care,* 181(10), 1441-1451. DOI: 10.1080/03004430.2010.534160
13 International Consortium on Nurturing Values and Spiritual Development in the Early Years, forthcoming (2022)

14 Bowlby J (1988) *A secure base. New York: Basic Books*
15 Prior, M. K., & Petra, M. (2019). *Assessing the Effects of Childhood Multitype Maltreatment on Adult Spirituality. Journal of child & adolescent trauma,* 13(4), 469–480. https://doi.org/10.1007/s40653-019-00288-8

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were more likely to engage in delinquent behavior, commit violent crimes, or abuse their future family members in adulthood, when compared to children who did not experience early family violence (Early Childhood Peace Consortium, 2018)[16].

Spiritual nurturing has been found to be a protective factor that aids in coping with trauma, helping to find a sense of support and protection, and effectively handling the stressors and uncertainties associated with difficulties (Andrade, 2017)[17]. As such, it is particularly important in contexts where children are affected by violence or have been victims of violence.

Nurturing the spiritual development of children in the early years of life, together with other positive inputs, such as responsive caregiving, child protection, and a focus on holistic well-being, can be a protective factor, an aid to coping, and a means for prevention of violence. Spiritual development is thus a powerful transformative agent that, together with these other factors, can significantly reduce the child's experience of violence. This, in turn, can reduce the child's likelihood of later engaging in violence themselves—potentially also against children—as an adult.

**BENEFITS OF SPIRITUAL DEVELOPMENT IN CHILDREN**

The spiritual development of children has the potential to contribute to their well-being, with positive impacts in all areas of their lives. Studies show that children who had two generations of caregivers who emphasized their spiritual development (for instance, a gran-

dparent and a parent) showed 80% less depression as youth than children who did not. On the other hand, externalizing behaviors such as aggression, hostility, conduct disorder and delinquency, as well as internalizing behaviors such as depression and anxiety, have also been shown to transmit intergenerationally across three generations of parents and children (Kim et al, 2009)[18].

The spiritual development of children early on benefits their holistic well-being for years to come. Nurturing the spiritual development of children can create the foundations for strengthening life meaning and hope, even when life presents difficult challenges.  Youth who as younger children were exposed to spiritual development demonstrated less aggressive behavior, less substance use, fewer high-risk behaviors, and less risk of depression (Miller, 2015)[19]. Opportunities for children to foster positive relations with others and develop their sense of purpose and meaning, help them to become resilient to violence across the lifespan, reducing the chance of becoming either a victim or a perpetrator, and increasing the chance of becoming an agent of positive change.

Spiritual nurturing has also been shown to be a significant predictor of happiness in children, both in terms of the intrapersonal dimension, which supports the value they give to their lives, and the communal aspect which refers to the quality of their interpersonal relations (Holder, 2010)[20]. The benefits to the sound development of children are multiple and show the critical importance of ensuring

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16 Early Childhood Peace Consortium (ECPC) (2018). Contributions of Early Childhood Development Programming to Sustainable Peace and Development. New York: *Early Childhood Peace Consortium.*
17 Vinueza Andrade, M.A (2017) *The role of spirituality in building up the resilience of migrant children in Central America: Bridging the gap between needs and responses, International Journal of Children's Spirituality,* 22:1, 84-101

18 Hyoun K. Kim, Deborah M. Capaldi, Katherine C. Pears, David C. R. Kerr, y Lee D. Owen (2009). *"Intergenerational Transmission of Internalising and Externalising Behaviours Across Three Generations: Gender-Specific Pathways". Criminal Behavior and Mental Health* 19(2): 125–141. doi: 10.1002/cbm.708 Disponible en: https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2715275/
19 Miller, Lisa (2015). *The Spiritual Child: The New Science on Parenting for Health and Lifelong Thriving.* NY: St. Martin's Press
20 Holder, M.; Coleman, B.; y Wallace, J. (2010). *Spirituality, Religiousness, and Happiness in Children Aged 8–12 Years. Journal of Happiness Studies.* 11. 131-150. 10.1007/s10902-008-9126-1

that every child grows with full access to their innate capacity for spiritual development. This in turn contributes to paving the way to more peaceful and inclusive societies.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The right to spiritual development as part of the holistic well-being of children, is therefore, a critical aspect for their protection, the fulfilment of other rights, as well as their empowerment  to be and become individuals with a high sense of belonging, purpose and meaning in their lives, able to contribute positively to the lives of others and their communities. The spiritual development of children is not an optional aspect of child development, it is at the core of their well-being, providing anchors for the child to develop well in other aspects of their lives.   The following recommendations aim to provide policy makers and practitioners, with a set of ideas to prioritize the spiritual development of children as part of the support to the development and education of children.

**1. Demystify spiritual development as a sole aspect of religion.** Ensure that the spiritual development of children is understood as a right, as stipulated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and as a contribution to children's holistic well-being, independently of their religious or non-religious affiliation.

**2. Integrate spiritual development as part of the holistic well-being and education of children from the early years.** Work together with parents, caregivers and educators, including faith actors, to foster children's spiritual development through pedagogical practices that support the creation of safe environments, the building of positive relations, and the exposure to empowering experiences for children to develop their sense of meaning,

purpose and belonging.

**3. Build evidence on the importance of spiritual development for the holistic development of children and its contribution to violence prevention and the protection of other rights.** Document good practices that prioritize the spiritual development of children and its impact of violence prevention, particularly how it can contribute to positive child upbringing practices, and for children to develop positive relations with others, prevent engagement in high-risk behaviors, and contribute to their participation in society.

**4. Work together with secular and faith-based organizations** to promote the right to spiritual development across all domains of child development.  This can contribute to develop cross-sectoral collaborations for the well-being of children, and integrated services to respond to children's cognitive, physical, social, emotional and spiritual needs.

**5. Promote the spiritual development of children as a contribution to building more inclusive and peaceful societies.** Fostering children's spiritual development contributes to children's ability to develop positive relations with others across gender, and religious, ethnic, and socio-economic groups. This forms the foundation for social cohesion, contributing to the promotion of freedom of religion and belief, as well as building more inclusive and peaceful societies.

**6. Invest in the spiritual development of children.** Include the spiritual development as part of holistic well-being and education of children, and allocate funding to train caregivers and educators, to collect data on the impact of interventions, and to develop programs that prioritize it.  Make sure to budget it across several sectors and programs.

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Ms. Uribe is currently convener of the International Consortium on Nurturing Values and Spirituality in Early Childhood for the Prevention of Violence, and of the Working Group on Children and Violence of Child Rights Connect.  Previously she served as Deputy Coordinator of the Working Group on Education and Fragility for the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE).  Ms. Uribe holds a Master in Peace and Conflict Transformation from the University of Basel, Switzerland; a specialization in Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and Bachelor's degree in international Relations and Finance from Externado University in Colombia.  Ms. Uribe served from 2018 to 2021 on the Steering Group of the International Partnership for Religion and Development – PaRD, and is a current member of the Executive Committee of Child Rights Connect.

# Musical bonfires to learn about Uruguayan and Latin American music since early childhood
## A cross-generational community engagement experience

*By Ed.Soc. Silbia González Boldrini
and Lic. Gabriela González Tiscordio*

"Because the value of what is public is that it belongs to everyone, which brings us together as a community" (Rodríguez; Puertas, 2016).

The Early Childhood Care Center and Playroom "Los Teritos" has been in place for 64 years. It is a public center managed by the Uruguayan Institute for Children and Youth (INAU). It falls under the scope of the West Office of INAU.

It is a socio-educational project to promote and protect the rights of children and youth.

It is located west of the city of Montevideo, northeast of Villa del Cerro. This area has the highest number of births per year and is known as "the cradle of Montevideo." Poverty rates in this area are high, mainly concentrated in children.

Daily, it serves children in the early childhood age range, 3 months to 3 years and 11 months (80 children), and 45 children and youth, ranging from 4 to 14 years old, through the Playroom Project.

The principle of Educational Community guides our work. We view our members as subjects of rights, subjects of learning, and participating subjects. These concepts mean we adopt a Comprehensive Protection approach and a worldview that understands human rights as universal.

**CAPI IS A SPACE FOR KNOWLEDGE AND CROSS-GENERATIONAL CULTURE TO COME TOGETHER**

We view children as social actors capable of forging ahead and producing culture. Therefore, we see the Center as a cultural space that aims to offer opportunities that enhance creativity, imagination, critical thinking, and social, cultural, and aesthetic sensitivity.

These notions are the driving forces to build educational projects that try to break away from the dominant logic of "compartmentalized classroom" spaces, promoting diverse interactions among children, adults, their surroundings, and other actors in their immediate and broader community.

It is a place that respects children's time and space but with open doors to others: students, neighbors, artistic proposals, etc.

Over the years, it has become a point of reference. It provides a great sense of belonging and counts on the participation of the families it serves and the community in general.

One of our objectives is that participation leads to meaningful learning experiences for everyone, as we understand participation as a human right, regardless of the age of those who engage.

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The right to participate is expressed and materialized differently based on the age and the person's role in the institution.

Children in early childhood participate when:

- They can move, explore, experiment, and choose how and with what to play.
- They have objects and materials that fit their interests.
- Their personal needs and times are met.
- They are understood, comforted, hugged, looked at, encouraged, and cared for.
- They can choose their playmate(s), participate in small groups with children their age or older, and share collective spaces.
- They get answers to their different forms of communication.
- They can try out "solutions" to their problems.
- They are encouraged to solve everyday situations on their own.
- They enjoy activities based on their interests.

The children and youth in the Playroom (4 to 15 years old):
- They get involved in groups that offer them opportunities for social interaction.
- They have access to diverse cultural initiatives.
- They propose and discuss topics of their interest.
- They organize themselves to carry out recreational activities, projects, investigations, etc.
- They engage with other children and adolescents in inter-institutional environments, neighborhoods, etc.
- They evaluate the proposals they receive and their own proposals.

Families:
- They receive information about the educational proposals and their children's individual processes.
- They are asked for their input on topics and interests to be included in the educational initiatives.
- They come together in groups to share topics of their interest.
- They make arrangements to help improve the quality of the Center's initiatives.
- They make suggestions, discuss, contribute and carry out social and cultural activities and events at the Center.
- Every year they evaluate the initiatives that are offered to their children.

The community:
- The Center provides a space where they feel a sense of belonging.
- They engage in group activities.
- They propose and organize activities around the Center as one of the critical actors.

The Work Team:
- They reflect on the practices undertaken.
- They take on individual and collective responsibilities.
- They take part in and engage in training activities.
- They build a work environment that makes the task enjoyable.
- They take on the challenge of working with other institutions and organizations.
- They make the necessary arrangements to carry out the multiple functions in a center that aspires to local development.
- They evaluate their performance.

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## MUSICAL BONFIRES TO LEARN ABOUT URUGUA-YAN AND LATIN AMERICAN MUSIC.

For the last 9 years, the "Fogón de Los Teritos" (Los Teritos bonfire) has been lit weekly. The "Musical Bonfires" is a proposal that integrates all children, from babies to teenagers, and is open to welcoming families, neighbors, students, and anyone who wishes to participate.

It is a space for children to get acquainted with the music of Uruguay and Latin America. Sitting in a circle embraces the encounter between people. Around the bonfire, we evoke cultural and historical memory; it is also the time to see and listen to each other. It is a space to go from being a spectator to becoming a protagonist.

To expand the "cultural curriculum" children can own and enjoy, breaking away from the hegemonic and dominant notions.

Every month we sing, dance, play with and enjoy songs by a Latin American musician. Every month we also celebrate events associated with our social life. For example, in March, we sing to women; in May, we sing to workers; in June, we bring back the historical memory and sing to our grandparents; in July, to our friends and invite other centers to join us; in August to the students who come to Los Teritos...

Around our bonfires, we have welcomed: Alfredo Zitarrosa; we listen to, sing and dance around with his cats and his candombes (Uruguayan music) and play with objects he used in his daily life, guitars, mates, ties, berets, etc.; Violeta Parra, we learn about her story, dress like her, sing her songs, we become doctors, chemists, architects (song "Me gustan los estudiantes") and showered with flower petals ("La Jardinera" ).

We also welcomed Gustavo Pena, Eduardo Mateo, and many others.

Over the course of the past 9 years we have created songs that represent us and we sing them ("La cumbia de Los Teritos," "Mujer Bonita es la que Lucha," "La descacharrada," a song to fight the dengue mosquito, etc.). These songs also build identity, they go to children's homes with them, and they have wings and go beyond the walls of the Center.

There have been other spin-off activities inspired by our Fogones, as it is a project that we "build as we go," for example, the "Serenades." This brings back the tradition of this neighborhood of meatpacking workers, who, after their workday, would gather to sing and then, as a tribute, would visit someone's house (on request) and gift them their songs from the sidewalk. Thus, we receive requests from families and from children to sing to their grandmothers, their aunts, or to the families of neighboring cooperatives who build their own homes to encourage and cheer them on in such undertaking; or to their peers who may be sick for a long time and cannot come to the Center.

In 2020, amid the pandemic and because we defy uncertainty, we celebrated Mario Benedetti's 100th birthday and shared his poems; we played and became writers, visited his home, and told the families who he was, what he liked as a child, who his parents were, etc. We did it from afar and close together when it was allowed. The Serenatas and Fogoncitos in the streets also served as a break from the isolation and to stay together when it was not allowed.

It has been organized by a devoted team that has dedicated their time to planning each meeting and sustaining it over time. Juan Daniel Hernandez, musician, and singer-son-

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gwriter, has made outstanding contributions to the team, and so has Albestela Colonnese (director of the Center for 13 years). For different reasons, these colleagues are no longer part of the team today.

The two years of the pandemic have significantly impacted our most deeply rooted principles of closeness, open doors, encounter, and participation. Today we are rebuilding the circle, to recover the music, the small and big hugs, to heal and "defend joy," as our dear Mario (Benedetti) said, and "to get back in tune, with others, with the environment, with what is vital" (Ritcher, K), this is what we are currently working on.

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Music, learning how to play the strings, experimenting,
always playing.

# The right of children and youth with disabilities to participation
## A tool for effective inclusion

*By Agustina Ciancio*

"The goal of participation is empowerment for children with disabilities and recognition... that they are rights holders who can play an active role in their communities and society." (Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, General Comment No. 7, para. 74) 74)

This paper aims to address the scope of the right to participation, focusing on the situation of children with disabilities[1].

We intend to analyze the content and scope of this right with the understanding that it goes far beyond being a prerogative of children with disabilities and that it is a tool for achieving effective social inclusion and, consequently, a more equal society. We do so based on the interpretations of the International Protection Bodies of the United Nations human rights protection system—as they are authorized interpreters of the Conventions that enshrine this right.

**VIEWS AND CONSIDERATIONS ON CHILDHOOD AND DISABILITY. THE OBSTACLES POSED BY THE SOCIAL CONTEXT**

Those who have studied the different approaches to disability and childhood throughout history have observed how behaviors towards both groups differ as conceptualizations about them change.

It is not our intention to draw an analogy between the worldviews on childhood and disability and their changes as if they were identical issues, as this would be an overly simplistic and irresponsible approach. However, we can say that they both share a common element, the reason behind this paper: Children and people with disabilities of all ages have historically been discriminated against and excluded within societies.

Before the creation of human rights protection instruments aimed at promoting and protecting the specific rights of both groups, the models in place viewed them as objects of wardship, and as such, they were not considered rights holders. This meant, among many other things, that their voices were not heard, that other people made decisions on their behalf, and in many cases, they were also the ones who expressed their will. In other words, there was a disconnect between the person who held the rights and those who had the social legitimacy to demand them or define their content[2].

With the approval of the United Nations International Convention on the Rights of the Child (hereinafter CRC), there was a paradigm shift in the approach to public policies regarding children and youth. Children were no longer considered subject to guardianship but were now viewed as rights-holders. This required

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1 We use the term "children" as defined in Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.

2 When referring to childhood, Pupavac defines this problem as the tension between the rights-holder (children and youth) and the moral agent (adults) who defines, or pretends to define, the meanings assigned to such rights.

the adoption of a non-adult-centric perspective to apply the CRC effectively. Consequently, there was a political, social, and cultural change in how childhood is seen.

In addition to broadening the range of rights recognized, the provisions of the CRC also brought about a change in the relationship between the State and children: The State no longer adopts a top-down approach to decide on the lives of children, but rather, it is the children themselves who can demand that the State, as the guarantor, protects and enforces their rights. Thus, it becomes an obligation for State Parties to consider the opinion and participation of this population as the beneficiaries of these policies (Beloff, 1999).

Regarding disability, it was only in 2006, when the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (hereinafter CRPD) was adopted at the United Nations, that the universal human rights of persons with disabilities were recognized. In the Inter-American context, the Inter-American Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Persons with Disabilities was already in place since 1999.

Under the principle "nothing about us without us," this instrument was produced and formulated with the hard work and participation of civil society, which illustrates how important it was for the beneficiaries of the standards to participate in the process.

But the most significant contribution of the CRPD was the consolidation of a paradigm shift in the concept of disability. The Social Model embodied in the Convention left behind—at least in theory—the so-called rehabilitation model, which viewed persons with a disability as bearers of a "deficit" that needed to be "normalized." The Convention promotes

a new approach focusing on the person and not on his or her disability, in the understanding that such disability results from social barriers, physical or attitudinal barriers that prevent the person with an impairment[3] from living in society on an equal basis with others. People with disabilities are "disabled" due to society's refusal to accommodate individual and collective needs within the general activities involved in economic, social, and cultural life. (Palacios, 2008)

By outlining this concept, the CRPD, also acknowledges that all persons with disabilities are rights-holders and, therefore, can and should be able to exercise all human rights.

## THE RIGHT TO PARTICIPATION, THE TOOL FOR CHANGE

Although these new paradigms have meant significant progress, the reality is that even today, children with disabilities are still affected by the remnants of those views, which continue to discriminate and segregate; but what is most important is that they still remain as one of the most silenced and invisible groups in all societies. We still need to place on the agenda the need to include children with disabilities as active subjects in our societies, whose voices must be heard. For this, the right to participation becomes critical.

As Valeria Llobet explains, social policies are not just the result of the dominant beliefs about childhood and youth, but they build and promote social images and discourses about these groups (Llobet, 2010). Consequently, defining who designs and decides the content of the public policies concerning children is not a minor issue.

3 We adopt the concept of impairment outlined in Article 1 of the CRPD: "...disability results from the interaction between persons with impairments and attitudinal and environmental barriers, among others, which hinders their full and effective participation in society on an equal basis with others."

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As stated by the Committee on the Rights of the Child: "Engaging children in such a process not only ensures that the policies are targeted to their needs and desires but also functions as a valuable tool for inclusion since it ensures that the decision-making process is a participatory one." (General comment N° 9, Committee on the Rights of the Child, para. 32).

## LEGAL REGULATIONS ON THE RIGHT TO PARTICIPATION OF CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES

Article 12 of the CRC[4] —together with Article 23, paragraph 1 about the right to be heard— recognizes the right to participation of children with disabilities. This right is one of the fundamental values of the Convention, and consequently, it is not just a right in itself but must also be taken into account when interpreting and enforcing all other rights. (General comment N° 12, Committee on the Rights of the Child).

The right to be heard can encompass both the rights of an individual child or those of children as a group. The latter refers to the possibility for a group of children to express their views and consider them in decision-making, policy-making, law-making, or other measures. Being part of such decision-making processes is a way of exercising this right. General comment N° 12, Committee on the Rights of the Child).

The Committee on the Rights of the Child explained that Article 23 of the CRC should be considered as the leading principle for the

4 General comment N° 12 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child explains that although the term "participation" itself does not appear in the text of article 12, this term has evolved and is now widely used to describe ongoing processes, which include information-sharing and dialogue between children and adults ... and in which children can learn how their views and those of adults are taken into account and shape the outcome of such processes.

implementation of the Convention with respect to children with disabilities, which entails, among other things, that States should facilitate the child's active participation in the community, and reinforces it by saying that: "The core message of this paragraph is that children with disabilities should be included in the society" (General Comment N° 9, Committee on the Rights of the Child, para. 11).

The CRPD recognizes participation as a general obligation and as a cross-cutting matter. It outlines the obligation of States Parties to closely consult with and actively involve persons with disabilities, including children with disabilities (Art. 4, para.3 CRPD). Likewise, in a broad understanding of this right, it also enshrines the right of persons with disabilities to be involved in the monitoring process of the implementation of the Convention (Art. 33, para. 3) as part of a broader concept of participation in public life.

PIn particular, the CRPD states that States Parties shall ensure that children with disabilities have the right to express their views freely on all matters affecting them, on an equal basis with other children, and to be provided with disability and age-appropriate assistance to realize that right [5]. (Art. 7 para. 3 CRPD.)

## THE STANDARDS THAT SHOULD GUIDE STATES IN IMPLEMENTING THE RIGHT TO PARTICIPATION.

The concept of participation emphasizes that including children should not be a momentary act but the starting point for an intense exchange between children and adults on developing policies, programs, and measures in all relevant contexts of children's lives. (General Comment N° 12, Committee on the

5 In this regard, it is important to take into account the obligation to provide assistance, which derives directly from the obligation to provide reasonable accommodation.

Rights of the Child, para. 13)

In addition, the adoption of measures to ensure that children with disabilities can freely express their views and that those views are given due weight is also a way of guaranteeing the right to equality and non-discrimination (General comment N° 12, Committee on the Rights of the Child, para. 78 on the connection between articles 12, 2 and 6 of the CRC).

*The duty to systematically include children with disabilities in decision-making processes.*

The right to participation is a right that must be guaranteed, without any exclusion based on the type of impairment, as may be the case for persons with psychosocial or intellectual disabilities, including children with disabilities. State Parties must *systematically include children with disabilities in the development and implementation of legislation and policies to give effect to the Convention and in other decision-making processes (Emphasis added by the author)* (General comment N° 7, Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, para. 24 and 25).

*Obligation to ensure the necessary support for all children with disabilities to be able to express their views*

Under the obligation to ensure the implementation of this right for children experiencing difficulties in making their views heard, State Parties must make sure children with disabilities are equipped with and enabled to use any mode of communication necessary to facilitate the expression of their views (General comment N° 12, Committee on the Rights of the Child, para. 21).

The duty to provide children with disabilities

with support in their decision-making entails, among other things, providing child-friendly information and adequate support for self-advocacy and ensuring appropriate training for all professionals working with and for such children. (General comment N° 7, Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, para. 75)

In addition to the above, for children with disabilities to be heard in all processes that affect them, they must also be duly represented in the different bodies such as parliaments, committees, or other forums where they can express their opinion, providing the means of communication they require to facilitate the expression of their views. In addition, their organizations' participation should be considered indispensable in consultations addressing specific issues that concern them. (General comment N° 7, Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, para. 75)

*The notion that children can form their own views should be the norm rather than the exception.*

One aspect that is critical to the issue in question is outlined in Article 12 of the CRC, which establishes the duty of "States Parties to assure to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views the right to express those views freely" (Art. 12, CRC).

In this regard, the Committee made it very clear that this phrase should not be seen as a limitation but rather as an obligation for State Parties to assess the capacity of the child to form an independent opinion to the greatest extent possible. This means that State Parties cannot begin with the assumption that a child is incapable of expressing her or his own views. On the contrary, State Parties should presume that a child has the capacity to form her or his own views and recognize that she

or he has the right to express them; it is not up to the child to first prove her or his capacity (General comment N° 12, Committee on the Rights of the Child, para. 20).

*The right to participation and public budgeting*

The right to participation must be guaranteed in decision-making processes on issues that affect them both directly and indirectly, such as, for example, the preparation of public budgets.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child has issued a General Comment on the matter where it points out that State Parties have two obligations: on the one hand, to guarantee participation in decision-making on public spending, and on the other, to allocate resources to ensure full participation, for example, by allocating resources to provide training (General Comment N° 19, Committee on the Rights of the Child, para. 53).

Budgeting is a recurring matter in the Concluding Observations prepared by the Committee on the Rights of the Child. For example, it has ordered, for example, that specific funds be allocated to organizations of women with disabilities and children with disabilities to enable their full and effective participation in the process of drafting, developing, and implementing laws and policies and in the monitoring framework (Concluding Observations on Botswana, 2019).

*The right to participate is an obligation of immediate application*

Finally, we should not forget that, as stated by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the right to participate is a civil and political right and, therefore, an obligation of immediate application, not subject to any form of budgetary restriction, to be applied to decision-making, implementation and monitoring processes related to the Convention (General comment N° 7, Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, para. 28).

**TO CONCLUDE: RAISING AWARENESS**

It is not the intention of this paper to be construed as all-encompassing, but rather this paper was intended to provide an initial view on how to realize the right to participation of children with disabilities. However, as observed, if the measures adopted only target children with disabilities, we will only be addressing part of the problem.

The Committee on the Rights of the Child has expressed concern about paternalistic approaches in society that limit the expression of children's views, both within the family and in public forums, which prevents them from participating meaningfully in public decision-making processes. (Concluding Observations on Costa Rica, 2020, para. 21).
The Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities has also addressed this issue. It considers it an obstacle for the effective enjoyment of this right. It has pointed out that to achieve full and effective participation, it is not enough for State Parties to provide appropriate support. Still, they must also develop a strategy to help eliminate stigma and for children to feel safe and respected when expressing themselves in public. (General comment N° 7, Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, para. 27).

To achieve full and effective participation, State Parties must also implement systematic awareness-raising programs, including media campaigns and training programs aimed at all public sector officials, to overcome en-

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trenched discriminatory stereotypes in society (General comment Nº 7, Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, para. 27). Unless we break down the attitudinal barriers that marginalize and silence children with disabilities, their voices will never be truly heard. And this is perhaps the most complex, but by no means impossible, task.
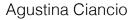
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I was recently a speaker at the XI Latin American Congress on Childhood, Family, and Youth.

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# An approach to trafficking adolescents in Uruguay

## Tools for the study of the social representations of victims

*By Mag Psic. Soc. Luis Purtscher*

**SUMMARY**

This article suggests a series of coordinated tools with which to study the social representations of teenage victims of trafficking. To this end, it briefly conceptualizes the social representations and expressions adopted by trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation in Uruguay, and it explores the techniques used and, further, the focal points of inquiry.

Keywords: trafficking adolescents for the purpose of sexual exploitation, social representations, techniques and categories.

### I was very young

I was born in Montevideo
and I grew up in the countryside
I am 25 years old and have two children
I was already 12
when I met my mother
she took me with her
but not to be with me
for her convenience
as my brothers are all boys
and I'm the only girl
she sold me to a man
who did what he liked with me
he got me into a trafficking ring
I was very young

there are things I remember and things I don't
it's like putting memories into a little box.
I put them into a little box to survive
I'm afraid of being alone
when you are a trafficked woman
you lose track of time
they take you in a van
it's like being dead
you don't know where you are
you feel dead
inside and out
as if you can't breathe
as if everyone's pulling at you
and you can't scream
you can't talk
you can't say here I am
and I was the only girl
and I was very young
now I am a mother and I do not want my story to repeat itself

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This account, told in the form of ethnopoetry[1], brief and complex, connects us to a story that is the personal expression of a social problem made invisible on a daily basis, which is not always understood, and that mercilessly cuts across the lives of teenage victims of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

In their passage through various state institu-

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1 This account is taken from an interview conducted with a young victim of trafficking and is presented in an ethnopoetic format. This is an alternative way to socialize data, and tell a story in a different way, by resorting to poetic resources and through them, achieve better communication than that offered by a prose-based testimony (Coffey, A and Atkinson, P., 2003).

tions and other organizations, invisibility and conceptual shifts pervade these areas, as well as the specific practices of technicians and operators in contact with cases, the preparation of reports and academic production (except for a few works, which address the problem[2] from the perspective of different disciplines and approaches).

Trafficking is a social production, one of the crudest expressions of objective (socio-economic and language) and subjective violence (iek, 2013), a violation of human rights, the crystallization of power relations, gender and generational domination and a crime whose complexity calls for profound reflection that undoubtedly exceeds the specific intentions and content of this paper.

This article will focus on a proposal for an approach to this particular form of violence, in an attempt to organize ideas and discuss categories that will permit an update of the design for a tool for the identification and interpretation of the social representations of adolescent victims of trafficking for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

This task is based on the existing literature on social representations, the social trajectories technique, one of the mainstays of clinical sociology (Gaulejac, 2013), my master's degree dissertation (Purtscher, 2019), the stories told by people who suffered trafficking in their adolescence and those told by technicians who work on such cases.

**ADOLESCENTES EN SITUACIÓN DE TRATA**

Trafficking is a social production, a violation of human rights, the expression of power relations, gender and generation domination, and a crime whose complexity requires profound reflections that undoubtedly exceed

2 For further information about these works, please see Gonzales and Tuana (2011), Prego (2012), Prego and Tuana (2012) and Asociación Civil El Paso (2020).

the specific intention and contents of this paper.

But even within these limitations, in practice it has been possible to identify forms of interweaving between the different types and modalities of violence, which are expressed in a continuum that occurs in the scenarios of intersectionality, which runs through the lives of children and adolescents and wreaks havoc on their capacity as individuals.

It is illustrative in this regard, to be aware of the significant growth of these cases, identified each year in the annual reports issued by SIPIAV (Comprehensive System for the Protection of Children against Violence) (2021) and CONAPEES (National Committee for the Eradication of the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents) (2021), and which underscores the continuity hypothesis; that is, the continuous violence present at each stage of growth.

According to the latest records, cases of sexual exploitation of children and adolescents amounted to 494, of which 16[3] have been identified as forms of trafficking occurring in various departments of the country, mostly in Montevideo, at ages ranging from 13 to 18, and mainly between 15 and 18, with institutional links with INAU (Children's Institute of Uruguay), the judiciary (with passages through the criminal and family courts) and in some cases, passages through psychiatric care clinics.

The Travesía project[4] directly addresses most of these cases, and for four years it has been observing in the accounts of the teenagers

3 According to the data provided by CONAPEES, based on the records kept by the itinerant teams of the civil organizations El Paso and Gurises Unidos, in agreement with INAU, and the official project Travesía.
4 The general purpose of the Travesía project, located in Montevideo, is the protection and exercise of the rights of children and adolescents in situations involving trafficking or commercial sexual exploitation, through the provision of comprehensive care.

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served, expressions of local operations that fit in with the significant verbs used to identify the crime (UN, 2000), in terms of recruitment, transfer and reception for the purpose of sexual exploitation (Zina, 2018).

Their paper noted that recruitment or attachment takes place through adult figures who appear to be close, who pretend to take on a protective role by offering to meet the teenager's needs, or through arrangements between the family of origin, whatever its form, and the pimp, in exchange for payment, settling debts, or through direct threats from the traffickers.

As for relocations, it was found that these are carried out systematically and with a change of destination, with the triple effect of removing the victim from their protection areas and agents, featuring mobility as an everyday event and with the appearance of freedom (since on many occasions they are sent alone), in order to be able to attend a variety of different places (usually parties) in exchange for promises or agreements, which in addition to being illegal, are rarely fulfilled.

This establishes links of immediate dependence, built on economic or protective ties, the handing over of money, mobile phones and guidance, or simply forms of direct manipulation, generally linked to offering greater access to material goods and better treatment than they received in the family of origin.

As for reception and accommodation, it has been observed that influence is exerted in various ways, so that adolescent girls leave their places of reference, as well as causing a separation from adults who question or investigate their practices, in a cycle that includes from staying overnight in places where a drug sales outlet operates to establishing

a fictitious romantic partnership with the exploiter, where in unclear circumstances other 'friendly' adults begin to arrive, with the purpose of obtaining favours that most frequently include the exploitation of the body.

## REGARDING REPRESENTATIONS

The theory of social representations developed by Moscovici (1984) as well as by other authors and currents of re-interpretation, constitute an area in which to rethink these issues and propose alternative views and practices. For Denisse Jodelet (1984, p. 474):

> The concept of social representation designates a specific form of knowledge, the knowledge of common sense, whose contents manifest the operation of socially characterized generative and functional processes. They are a form of social thinking. Social representations are modalities of practical thinking oriented towards communication, understanding and mastery of the social, material and ideal environment.

As a process of construction of reality, social representations are understood on the basis of their two facets that are, at the same time, constituted and constituent thought and integrate, construct and at the same time reflect what is real (Ibáñez, 1988).

According to Weisz (2017), "Social representation can be said, thought or acted, and is expressed through gestures, words or actions. The representational, then, has repercussions in practice, where the world of life is produced and reproduced" (p.103).

Social representations perform: a) functions of knowing, since they enable understanding and explaining reality; b) identity functions, inasmuch as that knowledge is located in

people and groups in a historically determined space/time; c) orientation functions, as they are guides for action, and d) functions that justify postures and behaviours (Abric, 2001).

The social location of the agents involved is of fundamental importance, since social representations will be tinged with the system of values and dominant opinions in that placement, and will select the contents on which synchronized communication is based and the origins of that knowledge for that particular subject or group. Views and practices will be built upon that basis.

**REGARDING TECHNIQUES**

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In order to identify the key aspects of these representational positions, the qualitative techniques that can be used are varied and of diverse origin, but I consider that the analysis of social trajectories, semi-structured in-depth interviews, associative charters and drawings as being the most useful for engaging in dialogue with this triangular population.

Social trajectories allow us to "understand the path between the initial position and the acquired position" and the implications of historical experiences in the social, family and personal sense (Gaulejac, 2013). This involves marking three lines that respond to each of these aspects and inviting participants to point out the instances of greatest importance and allow them to identify changes, decisions, forced behaviour and relationships between the areas.

Semi-structured in-depth interviews (Hernandez Sampieri, R., Fernandez, C. and Baptista, P., 2010).

Interviews are conducted according to the categories and the focal points for analysis selected, in order to identify the social representation construction process. To this end, a guide consisting of thematic blocks and questions is organized. Depending on the openness and quality achieved in the dialogical interrelationship, new questions are introduced or some concepts are examined further.

Associative charters (Abric, 2001) are implemented on the basis of inductive terms[5], Interviewees are encouraged to carry out a second and third chain of associations, and collect at least three terms, so as to be able to carry out an analysis based on the significant intertwining between images, words, concepts and feelings generated by trafficking; the significant intertwining in the totality of associations.

Drawings Interviewees are asked to draw a trafficking victim or situation, and their works offer the possibility of identifying and triangulating social representations, since the drawings organize different processes to which the participant refers, bringing together symbolic elements that represent their view of the object of study (Jiménez & Martínez, 2011). In some cases, they might illustrate areas of development, identify participating actors and at the same time, express matters that are difficult to put into words, which are at the same time expressions of structured elements and organized around "central elements or meanings that make it possible to identify the content and hypothesize on central elements of the representation" (Abric, 2001, p. 58).

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5 In this case, the inducing terms used could be: trafficking is..., trafficking occurs because..., people trafficked are..., they come to trafficking because..., people cannot get out of trafficking because..., people can get out of trafficking because...

**THE FOCAL POINTS FOR INQUIRY**

The focal points for inquiry must be understood in their entirety, never on the basis of fragmentation or compartmentalization; since it is necessary to artificially separate them for analysis, they must be thought of as being in constant movement with interactions that permeate the representational configurations.

The focal points, which are also forms of categorization, are complemented by the categories relating to the construction of time and space, the body, permanence and change in the trafficking situation.

According to Quiñones, Supervielle and Acosta (2017), conceptualizing categories should be understood as a specific type of concept, which, in their journey through the research process:

> To the extent that these categories acquire meaning, they describe a phenomenon from a (theoretical) perspective. And insofar as they give rise to a definition, they include word elements and descriptive properties (Quiñones, Supervielle & Acosta, 2017, p.55).

The traditional constructs of this current of thought were modified in this proposal (although some, understood to be central, have been maintained), as established in the works of the procedural current of the social representations of Moscovici and Jodelet (Cuevas, 2016): the conditions of production, the field of information, the field of the image and representation. Some traditional focal points were replaced and changed to the analysis of social trajectories, the construction of real space, virtual space, nomination, feelings and emotions, the construction of time or times, the significance of the body and the processes of permanence and change in tra-

fficking cases.

It is understood that their inclusion makes it possible to strengthen analysis of the narratives and achieve greater awareness regarding the experiences of the victims.

Trajectories

As we mentioned above when describing the technique, the life path of the victim is explored here, emphasizing the path traced by interviewees in the social, family and personal spheres, pointing out those events that represented a shift, a distancing, a change of context, the beginning of the wave, the breaking of new ties, historical/social events with the force of a meaningful event.

Conditions of production

In this focal point on producing social representations, we examine aspects involving the basic social order, sex, age, training, country or department of origin, composition of their family of origin, any passages through care institutions, their relationship with them, the time elapsed, the type of contact and the identification of institutional reference points.

Organization of the information

In the information focal point, an attempt is made to explore how subjects organize their knowledge about trafficking, what selection processes they followed, on the basis of what sources and how they included them into their body of knowledge, communications established, knowledge and beliefs about the object of representation.

Agents involved and their interrelationships

This focal point aims to explore the characteristics of the agents involved in producing the

trafficking process and what roles they play at every point, as well as the ties they adopt.

## Representation and images

The focal point related to images and representation is perhaps the most complex and, at the same time, the most powerful in its ability to identify the meanings that individuals assign to trafficking, through elements of culture, beliefs, myths, images, prejudices, classifications, phrases, common everyday sayings and language constructions indicative of common sense.

## Nominations

This focal point refers to how adolescents who experienced or are experiencing trafficking are designated and how they state that they are designated.

## Feelings and emotions

The feelings and emotions focal point addresses aspects that produce social representations related to the affective development of the teenagers interviewed.

## The construction of time

This focal point is key in relation to identifying the analytical possibilities that it opens up. Elias' approach (2010) was to deny the existence of a unitary or linear homogeneous experience of time in history, so there is no experience that is detached from "where and when [he or she] may have lived" (p.17). Inasmuch as it presents itself as a noun, time lacks a verbal form, and takes on the appearance of having a metahuman, independent existence (Purtscher, 2019).
This author identifies the concepts of heterochrony to indicate the intersection of times

and that of achrony, "temporality without time", taking the representations not only at the moment in which they were developed but with the plurality of social interrelationships present at that time (García, 2014, p. 346).

It is interesting, in building this tool, to connect the contents of social representations to the significant interrelationships with other actors – with whom, where, when, why and what for – that make it possible to provide unity to a tetradimensional time, space, interrelationship and social representation.

Regarding this fundamental tool, it is necessary to understand how each of the stages of the trafficking process has been lived by the victims, at what moment they feel that they 'lost' or 'had their time stolen'.

## The construction of real space

As well as time, space is also constituted dynamically and intersubjectively in the construction of assigned meanings in a given socio-historical context.

Space is more than territory understood as a static place; more complex than locations, spaces and flows; it is the process of unterritorialization and territorialization (Deleuze & Guattari, 1988), leaving a location and rebuilding.

Similarly, and in particular in trafficking, owing to the meanings given to transit and exploitation, we can also speak of heterospace, to account for the weaving and coexistence of spaces, such as non-material space and the existence of "non-places" (without understanding them, in Augé's conceptualization, [2014] in the strictest sense of transitory space and anonymity, but as that place that is

without references and without meanings developed by the individual).

### The construction of virtual space

This focal point acquires significance in relation to the time that is materially dedicated to it, the possibilities of communication that it opens up, the anonymous or fictitious nature that it can adopt, the variety of identities with which interactions can be carried out, its functioning as a window display of images, a field of transaction and proposals. It has become an inescapable scenario when facilitating exploitation and trafficking situations, and is, therefore, an area for analysis.

### The significance of the body

The body is a meaningful and relational construction, "it is the interface between the social and the individual, nature and culture, the psychological and the symbolic" (Le Breton, 2002, p. 97).

The body gives an account of its experiences, of what is social. The body as a unit, as an object of transformation, as a dismembered space, as a sum of parts, as a cartography of orifices, has socio-historical, class, positional and oppositional meanings of dissimilar values in different geographical locations. In this study, we are interested in discovering the meanings attributed to the trafficked, commercialized, exploited body.

The possession of bodies is the commodity in this dispute for profit in the sex market, and is also the place upon which are marked messages of omnipotence, appropriation, exploitation, death and public announcement (Segato, 2016).

### The factors of permanence and change in trafficking cases

Permanence in the trafficking situation aims to conceptually address the reasons and mechanisms of restraint that adolescent girls identify in the trafficking process. The change in the situation approaches the identification of the intersectionalities of resistance, of the strengths they possess, the negative resistance they oppose, the supports they find in order to learn about their situation and the possibilities of freeing themselves from exploitation.

### BY WAY OF A CONCLUSION

Socializing these tools has the purpose of issuing an invitation to explore the social representations of teenage victims of trafficking, based on the conviction that we must be aware of what can be a hindrance to change and become a part of the transformation, on the basis of proximity and listening.

Conducting research and interventions then constitutes a strategy to strengthen genuinely comprehensive approaches, which will support victims in the process of shifting the meaning of the horrors they have suffered and changing their lives, so that these stories are not repeated.

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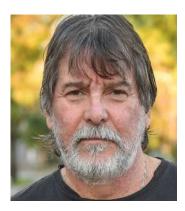
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