

## SYNOPSIS OF FOCAL POINT 3 PANEL DISCUSSION

### National Systems for the Promotion and Protection of Child Rights

Resolutions issued as from the Twentieth Pan American Child Congress (Lima, 2009) have called upon member States to renew their commitment to children and adolescents by strengthening their comprehensive protection systems.

The 22nd Pan American Child Congress (Cartagena, 2019) posed the challenge of moving forward in the “Consolidation of national protection systems: progress, challenges and lessons learned”, addressed in three panel discussions:

1. Progress and consolidation. Lessons drawn from experience.
2. Institutionality and legal frameworks.
3. Participation of different stakeholders.

These panels were attended by 13 of the 15 panellists invited (time issues prevented full attendance), from the States and civil society<sup>1</sup>, and 2 specialists/experts who were in charge of the summary and identification of the main developments and challenges.

### Developments

Some of the developments of the National Systems for the Promotion and Protection of Child Rights identified by the participating States and civil society were:

1. Strengthening national legal frameworks, bringing them increasingly into line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its optional protocols.
2. A trend towards decentralizing care services for children and adolescents at departmental and local levels, through shared responsibility for the comprehensive care and protection of children and adolescents.
3. The direct relationship between the participation of social organizations and children and adolescents, with the permanence and consolidation of the Advisory Councils at different levels.
4. The Child Welfare Virtual Expo 2019, as an excellent tool for collective knowledge building.
5. The existence of an observatory, as well as a public policy that generates data and evidence, in order to create better service offerings.
6. The value of adding the focus on rights, gender and equity (non-discrimination), joint responsibility, comprehensiveness and quality to National Systems for the Promotion and Protection of Rights.
7. The importance of the participation of civil society organizations, and their work coordinating with the States as actors and guarantors of National Protection Systems.
8. The strategy of working from the community level is sound, while other actors work on national advocacy for the constitution or strengthening of National Child Protection Systems<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Argentina, Colombia, Chile, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Nicaragua, Mexico, Paraguay, United States, Lumos and Save the Children.

<sup>2</sup> Extract from the Webinar summary held as follow-up to the 22nd Pan American Congress: “Community Protection Mechanisms, a common strategy for Child Protection Systems”, Thursday, 11 June 2020, via Zoom.

## Challenges

Some of the challenges of National Systems for the Promotion and Protection of Child Rights identified by participating States and civil society were:

1. The need for cross-cutting and common budgets to ensure the development of the Systems.
2. The need to strengthen coordination and cooperation efforts between the various public institutions and civil society organizations, which have a direct and indirect relationship with the child rights agenda, in order to encourage inter-agency work and the interconnection of intervention approaches.
3. The failure to incorporate ethnic, cultural and linguistic variables of the indigenous peoples of Latin America and the Caribbean, which would make it possible to care for children and adolescents and foster their development on the basis of their cosmogonic references.
4. The need to synchronize efforts to strengthen the social fabric, the generation of alternatives in the transit and destination of migrations and in the fight against xenophobia.
5. The need to create mechanisms to ensure the full participation of children and adolescents in the public policy cycle (a paradigm shift is urged).
6. The environment as an anchor for social and human development, with greater weight than social programmes targeting children and adolescents. It is essential to link the vision of social programmes for the environment with each other and with the rights of children and adolescents.
7. The need to transform the cultural elements that facilitate the systematic lack of protection and violation of the rights of children and adolescents.

## Recommendations of the Third Pan American Child Forum:

Although this panel did not receive any input from children and adolescents, inasmuch as they worked only on the issues of violence and participation, the documents prepared by them contain the following recommendations, applicable to National Promotion and Protection Systems:

1. We recommend that the States, the national protection systems, and regional and local governments should strengthen and generate programmes for the integration, protection and promotion of child rights, leading to further awareness of the rights of children and adolescents and the reduction of child abuse and thus, the eradication of domestic violence. This must be synchronized with the creation of new institutions, the allocation of a higher budget to protect children and adolescents within the family in cases of domestic violence, and the development of areas to enable children who are on the committees and adults to monitor these institutions and thus ensure that they function appropriately. Finally, it is recommended that State legal frameworks be strengthened to protect children and adolescents (Point 11 of the recommendations of the Cartagena Declaration on Violence against Children and Adolescents of the Americas).
2. Families and family members should support the participation of children and adolescents in their organized groups. The States should design public policies or laws so that child participation is ensured at all levels of government action, as a process and fundamental right. Venues and organized groups should be established to promote child participation, including all children and adolescents without discrimination, and encouraging the inclusion of vulnerable groups where their voices are respected and where States and their officials refrain from using forced or decorative participation (extracts from the document on the commitments and recommendations made by children and adolescents for the promotion of child participation).

3. The significance of the family as guarantor of the rights of children. In some families, children are ill-treated, and forced to work. As a recommendation, we call for the implementation and strengthening of institutions that protect children and families, and for the assurance of social protection and the protection of recreational spaces. We recommend that States take us into account, and that the participation of children and adolescents be a cross-cutting focal point, creating more opportunities for participation that allow dialogue with the authorities and allocating more economic and human resources to support the process of organized groups (extracts from the document prepared at the General Assembly of the Child Forum).

4. Both the COVID-19 pandemic and natural events, increasingly present in the region, have highlighted the social inequalities of our countries. This encourages us to work to return, not to a New Normal, but to a New Humanity in conditions of dignity, respect, tolerance and reciprocity, placing at the centre of our action the Best Interest of the Child<sup>1</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Ibid.