

Lima, September 23, 2009

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS OF CHILD PARTICIPATION IN THE AMERICAS

On the second day of the First Pan American Child Congress, the 64 participants explored the ways in which our right to participation is exercised in the Americas. We worked in different groups and then elected representatives to share our contributions and to draft a document summarizing our main opinions and proposals.

We shared our experiences and identified similarities and differences to shed light on the exercise of this right in all regions and to develop proposals to improve it. To this end, we took into consideration the different age groups (5 and under; 6 to 11; and 12 to 17) as well as the contexts for participation (family, school, community, State).

We share the main conclusions of this exchange and collective effort below.

- *Participation of children ages 5 and under is practically non-existent in any context. Children of this age are very dependent on adults. The experiences of children of this age are more closely associated with care than with participation.*
- *Adults believe that children have difficulty expressing themselves and that they do not have sufficient knowledge to participate.*
- *Some of us believe that this is also associated with the limited capacity of adults to listen and to pay attention to our viewpoints, opting to "impose" rather than to promote or encourage.*
- *The most important foundation is what the child first learns in his or her home, which is what he or she will repeat in the outside world. Some children are afraid to speak up when there is a possibility for disagreement.*



THEREFORE, WE RECOMMEND

- *Establishing Child Councils in all countries of the region. Taking into account the voices of children in the development and implementation of public policies.*
- *Ensuring that the people responsible for raising and caring for children instill them with confidence to encourage them to participate and express their ideas. Communication is the means to guarantee it.*
- *Training teachers and parents.*
- *Involving parents in monitoring the treatment their children receive at school.*
- *Including child rights in the school program, using experiential methods.*
- *Training teachers in child rights and encouraging participation.*
- *Facilitating installations for child participation. Promoting recreation, play and expression/communication.*
- *Ensuring that parents allow their children to express opinions on subjects affecting or involving their families.*
- *Creating early stimulation spaces to guarantee the participation of children ages five and under.*
- *Improving communication and relations among children.*
- *Enhancing employment conditions for adults in an effort to improve the quality of life of their families.*
- *Better organizing time to be able to engage in dialogue.*
- *Improving and expanding campaigns to disseminate rights.*