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Final Report

INTER-AMERICAN FORUM ON CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS “MY RIGHT TO PARTICIPATE”

Queretaro 22, 23 and 24 April, 2008

*(Approved through Resolution CD/RES. 03 (83-R/08) in the framework of the
83rd Regular Meeting of the Directing Council of the IIN
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FINAL REPORT



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SUMMARY MINUTES

Inter-American Forum on Children and Adolescents “My Right to Participate”

Queretaro 22, 23 and 24 April, 2008

The Inter-American Forum on Children and Adolescents entitled “My right to Participate” was convened by the Inter-American Children’s Institute (IIN) with the collaboration of the representatives of the Member States, the “Sistema Nacional para el Desarrollo Integral de la Familia” (National System for the Integral Development of the Family)-DIF and UNICEF. It became an important forum for dialogue and expression for children and adolescents participants, coming from thirteen States and actively delivered their conclusions about their particular vision to participate in the region.

As part of this important event, it is necessary to highlight some aspects of singular significance in terms of inter-American initiatives regarding the participation of children and adolescents:

The Member States of the Inter-American System that have participated, demonstrated a positive commitment and welcomed the proposal with interest, which was evident in the express will not only by encouraging the involvement of children in their respective countries, but by interacting with them, by hearing and responding to their queries and requirements under a committed vision on behalf of the rights of children and adolescents in our region.

The event achieved a regional and cultural integration with the participation of children came from countries of the Inter-American System distributed in the four regions. The experience of cultural integration was facilitated by the dynamics of working in the workshops and other recreational and cultural activities. The common language, solidarity and the interactive strategies were strengthened in the recognition of children and adolescents as rights holders.

The conclusions of the Forum were without a doubt, an opportunity to achieve impact in the States about the importance of the incorporation of child and adolescent participation in public policies.

The outcome of the Forum has ratified the expressed will of the IIN in the light of children's rights and of its Action Plan 2007-2011, on the need to deepen the initiatives arising from the recommendations of this unique event. Immediately following is a description of the development of the Forum:



PRINCIPLES

The work developed in the Inter-American Forum on Children and Adolescents. "My Right to Participate" complied with the general principles on child and adolescent participation established by the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

- Children have the right to be heard, to express their views freely on any matter that affects them, to freedom of expression, to thought, association and access to information.
- Measures that encourage and facilitate the participation of children should be implemented in accordance with their age and maturity.
- Participation must promote the best interests of children and their development.
- All children have equal rights to participate without discrimination .
- All children have the right to be protected against violence, abuse and exploitation.

OBJECTIVE

Generate a space for dialogue and exchange of experiences among children and adolescents representatives of various social realities of the Americas, which will allow us in the context of the children's rights, to know their views and proposals regarding the active participation in the design of actions, plans, programs and policies on behalf of children and adolescents.

THEMATIC CONTENTS

During the workshops three central subjects previously identified by coordinating the event, were considered, namely:

- How do we participate today girls and boys?
- How would we like to participate in our family, school and community?
- What do we propose to participate in the plans and programs aimed at children and adolescents?

METHODOLOGY

The activities were implemented with the purpose that the participants had the experience of a participatory process, which starts by knowing the other and then analyze and integrate their voices. Thus there were spaces of working subgroups in the context of which were included games, recreational activities, spaces of reflection, dialogue and generation of ideas, as well as the participation in the plenary to share the views of the groups.

The graphic expression of children and adolescents also had its space through murals and posters. To have combined game, dialogue and plastic activities provided freedom of expression and encouraged the joint work in which each participant found the most appropriate way to communicate and express his/her ideas.

The methodology used through graphic workshops and activities encouraged the participants to reflect, from their own experiences and environments, about how they live the exercise of their rights and how do they face the problems of their community. They defined how they perceive and understand the participation and specified as a group, what are speaking about when they make a reference to this concept.

This aspect of the methodology was one of the most important because it allowed them to reflect on their reality and on the possibilities offered by their environment. Additionally, the mechanisms to listen to the working experiences of other children and adolescents allowed them to assess their own performance, and opened to them a variety of alternatives to keep working and creating other spaces of participation in their communities.

ORGANIZATION

The activities were carried out in working groups, wherein each of the participants, selected four representatives, one from each region, namely: North America, South America, Central America and the Caribbean, both in relation to the final elaboration of conclusions and their reading during the integration with the participants of the Inter-American Meeting on the "Exchange of Experiences and Programs on Child Care."

ACTIVITIES

Children and adolescents constructed proposals for resolving some of the problems or obstacles identified for exercising their right to participation, based on the three basic contexts already mentioned: the family, the school and the community.

The important thing about this interactive meeting was that participants, beyond calling for more actions on the part of adults, constructed proposals.

CONCLUSIONS

How do we participate today girls and boys?

Children and adolescents who attended the Forum could share their experiences of participation and concluded that they have participated in different ways. They made a summary of their forms of participation :

- Give their opinion on consultations for the creation of laws, plans and budgets of government, on issues like comprehensive protection, food, citizenship, crime.
- Participate in networking groups for children and adolescents that are dedicated to the dissemination of children's rights, environmental problems and formation of values.
- Conducting campaigns to promote issues such as children's rights, citizenship, social conflicts, environment, health and participation, social, recreational and emergent work support.
- To attend conferences, meetings, forums and international and national assemblies to exchange experiences and discuss issues such as education, health, sexuality, violence, security and media.
- Express their views to governmental authorities and political leaders.
- Having a presence in the communication media through interviews that allow them to express.
- Visit educational institutions, churches and other spaces to give lectures on various topics.
- Elect representatives for children and adolescents.
- Meet commissions, as representatives of groups of children and adolescents.

- Attend workshops and training courses to qualify and obtain information.
- Participate at movements of aid to vulnerable groups in emergency situations.
- Develop projects, activities and specific works to improve the conditions of somewhere they live, through clubs and brigades. This may be possible through educational, cultural, sports or ecological activities.

How would we like to participate in our family, school and community?

As regards the **family** they concluded that they would like:

- Share experiences and ideas to build greater confidence within the families.
- Work on various family chores and help parents in making decisions.
- Practice values such as tolerance and respect among all family members
- Increase and improve communication and dialogue among family members through family agreements.

At **school** they would like:

- Participate in making decisions as regards the budget, disciplinary measures for students, teachers and directors.
- Helping with the tasks of cleaning and maintenance of schools, repair of damage for example, in the sports fields.
- Practice values such as tolerance and respect among all members of the school or educational community.
- Make internal meetings and assemblies to discuss the problems concerning the school.
- Organize sports and recreational activities among the school community.

Regarding the **community** they outlined the importance of being able to:

- Take part in Neighborhood Commissions.
- Maintain continuous communication between adults, children and adolescents.
- Take part of activities such as sports competitions, promoting culture, environmental care and so on.
- Promote values and attitudes among the community such as respect, tolerance, solidarity, love, unity, punctuality.
- Encourage traditions.
- Working in teams or groups to review, analyze and correct errors.
- Establish engagements between neighbors and community groups.

What do we propose to participate in the plans and programs aimed at children and adolescents?

They expressed ideas on how they can participate in the plans and programs undertaken by the governments aimed at children and adolescents, such as:

- Organizing meetings among children and adolescents to seek their views on different topics.
- Submit written proposals.
- Having representatives in the follow-up of the proposals jointly completed among children and adolescents.
- To count on institutions and liaison persons to make know and negotiate their proposals on the topic of the development and implementation of plans and programs that deal with children and adolescents.
- Open spaces in the communication media on the way to have a presence on radio, television, newspaper, Internet, and so on.
- Giving publicity to develop campaigns and to attract boys and girls attention.
- Develop communication networks through the use of means and technology such as Internet, telephone, posters and different mass media.
- Dialogue to establish agreements and create consensus between the institutions and children and adolescents .
- Information and training on various topics of interest.
- Organize assemblies at local, state and national levels among adults and children, came from governmental, community and civil institutions to create an Advisory Council.
- To organize various cultural, social, environmental programs and others with resources of self-management.

FINAL EXPOSITIONS

The contributions immediately following outlined arise from the expositions addressed by children and adolescents, assuming the representation of the different regional groups and thematic workshops:

Matías Maya Padilla. Mexico

This forum has been conducive to know and appreciate the experiences of involvement in the continent. We have encountered a great diversity. We've known different forms of life and political situations.

We found that children are participating at local, national and international levels, in the planning of the use of resources, community consultations, networking groups for children and adolescents involved in the formation of values, support to vulnerable groups, environmental care. We carry out specific works to support artistic and sports activities.

We are aware of the obstacles that limit our participation but we are also aware of our abilities.

Oscar Mauricio Ayala Rodríguez. El Salvador

Conclusions on how would we like to participate within the family:

Through the experiences and views. Helping parents with making decisions. We believe that practice values such as tolerance and respect is also to be involved. We want to participate in the dialogue.

At school we would like to participate in the selection of disciplinary measures and in making repairs. We could help with the improvement of the sports fields and gardens. To reinforce relations it is necessary the use of values.

The organization of sports activities recovers the values of each region.

Michael Davidson, Trinidad and Tobago

How do participate in the community? Many people do not recognize that we can share. It is important to share in support of solving problems. We would like to participate in organizing activities. Let us be there to talk about the things we like as the sport and culture.

We can also help to promote values such as love, punctuality, respect. Tolerance for little children. We want to have opportunities to participate and help. We want to be in teams to discuss solutions.

We are in capacity of solving the problems that affect us.

Mathyerlina Lorena Aranguren Jiménez. Venezuela

How do participate at the government and institutions that develop plans on behalf of children. We want to invite children to participate by organizing meetings between children and adolescents. We must have representatives who will follow up our proposals. We would also like to have a presence on radio, television and other communication media.

Dialogue and establish agreements among institutions. Have direct and organized contact with those in charge of implementing public policies. It is important to organize cultural and sports programs.

Hipatia Fernanda Vega Lema. Ecuador

Prepare the child of today and don't worry about the adult of tomorrow.

Congratulations to the organizers and participants.

We come with the hope of better countries and better lives. We leave with the hope of a better America.

In this Forum we felt actors and actresses in the real, effective and democratic participation of our America.



Queretaro, México
22, 23 and 24 April, 2008

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