

PRESS RELEASE

UNICEF and leaders from Cochabamba call for the protection of children from all forms of violence

Cochabamba, January 21, 2009.— Marking a new phase in the promotion of the campaign *Convivir – Sembrar Paz*, UNICEF, along with the Prefecture of Cochabamba and the Ombudsman, presented today in this city the results of the survey “*Children and Social Conflicts in Bolivia*”. This national poll, conducted between September and October 2008, reflects the perceptions and opinions of more than 2 thousand people in reference of violence against children in the context of social conflicts.

The study, carried out in Tarija, Oruro, Santa Cruz, La Paz, El Alto, Cochabamba and Trinidad, offers a wide and representative vision regarding the negative effect of the presence and activism of boys, girls and adolescents in social conflicts, manifestations and protests, and analyzes the impact of these practices in the exercise, respect and promotion of their rights. More than 80% of the population that participated in the study agrees that the presence of people under 18 years of age in social conflicts create in them conducts of intolerance, discrimination and violence.

Furthermore, the populations surveyed in the East, West and the Valley agree that the minors involved in these activities suffer different degrees of psycho-social damage, directly risk their physical integrity and compromise their attendance to school. The poll also brings up the use of violent images in the media and reflects the consensus of those polled regarding their adverse effect on boys, girls and adolescents.

Regarding the results of the study, the Representative of UNICEF in Bolivia, Gordon Jonathan Lewis, stated that “*the protection of infants, children and adolescents is a responsibility that must be undertaken by society as a whole with a vision of leadership*” and called for the participants to contribute to the “*design of strategies and actions that go beyond ethical formulations against violence to become efficient and sustainable policies*”.

Present at the event, which was presided by the Prefect of Cochabamba, Dr. Jorge Ledezma Cornejo, were also the UNDP Representative, Armando Ortuño, the Ombudsman, Arq. César Augusto Siles Aguirre and the Secretary of Human Development of the Prefecture of Cochabamba, Rubén Ustariz.

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Campaign of Social Mobilization *Convivir – Sembrar Paz*

Convivir – Sembrar paz constitutes an inter-institutional platform of social mobilization in favor of non-violence and the promotion of respect and tolerance, driven by the United Nations System in alliance with the Catholic Church, the Ombudsman and the UNIR Foundation. Since its beginning, this initiative was joined by national and departmental authorities, as well as by different collaborators from the private sector and NGOs. *Convivir – Sembrar paz* invites youths, companies, social movements and grass-roots organizations and all people and institutions to formulate proposals and activities of social mobilization to help promote positive and peaceful attitudes and stimulate good treatment and the respect and promotion of the rights of children and adolescents throughout the country.

About UNICEF

UNICEF Works in the field in 155 countries and territories in order to help children to survive and advance in life from the first infancy to adolescence. The largest supplier of vaccines for the poorest countries, UNICEF supports the health and nutrition of children, quality water and sanitation, quality basic education for every child and the protection of children against violence, exploitation and AIDS. UNICEF is entirely funded through the voluntary contributions of individuals, companies, foundations and governments.

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