

Adolescents in Latin America and the Caribbean: **Policy Guidelines**



**UNICEF Regional Office
for Latin America
and the Caribbean**

Contents

3 /	Foreword
5 /	I. Why Adolescents?
8 /	II. Towards a Positive View of Adolescence
10 /	III. Adults and Adolescents: From Conflict to Cooperation
12 /	IV. The Voice of Adolescents
14 /	V. The Right to Participation
15 /	a) Why Participation?
17 /	b) Types of Participation
18 /	c) Instances for Participation
20 /	d) Youth Cultures
22 /	VI. Policies for Adolescents
22 /	a) General Guidelines
24 /	b) Strategic Lines of Action
25 /	1. Autonomous Participation by Adolescents
26 /	2. Universalized Secondary Education
28 /	3. Strengthening Families
30 /	4. Establishing Juvenile Justice Systems
32 /	5. Promoting Sexual and Reproductive Health from the Standpoint of Human Rights
35 /	6. Stimulating Cultural and Artistic Creativity and Expression
36 /	c) Basic Indicators: What Each Country Should Know
38 /	Bibliography

Foreword

The region of Latin America and the Caribbean, today more than ever, faces the challenge of responding to the needs and demands being put forward by those children who have left behind early childhood and are now approaching adulthood. We recognise that the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) had historically oriented its activities in large part towards those in their early childhood years. Today, this focus has been widened to include adolescent girls and boys in accordance with the mandate of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Without leaving unattended the needs of younger children, UNICEF is seeking to give greater visibility to adolescent boys and girls between the ages of 12 and 18. We now know that this age group which constitutes around 20% of the region's total population are living in very diverse circumstances and are experiencing new situational contexts of risk that were largely unknown to preceding generations.

We have engaged in substantial consultation with our Country Programmes and we have entertained discussions with colleagues from other organisations as well as the academic world so as to better enable us to evaluate our own experience. The results of these systematic reflections can be found in the present document "Adolescence in Latin America and the Caribbean: Orientations for Policy Formulation" prepared by UNICEF-TACRO. It will quickly become evident to the reader that UNICEF, far from starting from square one, is actively engaged in the development of new and innovative initiatives, designed above all to help us learn how to listen to the points of view being expressed by our adolescents as citizens who see their needs going unmet and who offer telling criticisms of the social and institutional context in which they are growing.

We are disposed to redirect the focus of our efforts to whatever extent necessary so that the right of children and adolescents to participate can increasingly become transformed into reality. We know that our societies will be more democratic and more respectful of the rights of all people if we are able to realise our responsibility as adults to facilitate authentic participatory practice on the part of children and adolescents in the larger decisions that affect their lives.

We wish to share the present document as part of a collective reflection that we intend to continue advancing. Full compliance with the rights stipulated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child as well as with all those international human rights instruments which protect adolescent boys and girls demands that we continue the dialogue which has been initiated thus far. The specific programmatic strategies proposed herein constitute a response to the most urgent problems identified to date and will have to be successively revised in the light of subsequent analyses. As our experience has shown us thus far, we must begin first by listening and by recognising that human beings of all ages need to mutually engage in a new paradigm of co-operation if we are to construct democratic societies which respect every individual.

PER ENGEBAK
Regional Director

UNICEF Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean



“ They say we’re the future,
By then, we won’t be young.
The future arrived
a long time ago¹ ”

I. Why Adolescents?

Concern for the issue of adolescence is relatively recent in UNICEF. Traditionally, and for reasons dating back to the start of the organization, UNICEF has concentrated its efforts on the first stage of life (0-6 years). Later, the organization’s interest in basic education led to the formulation of policies for the second stage of life (7 to 12 or 14 years), which coincides with the time children dedicate to mandatory primary education.

Article 1 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which is the backbone of UNICEF’s institutional mandate, defines the child as a human being under 18 years of age. This regulatory change demands a new expansion in UNICEF’s priorities and, hence, in its policies. It also implies the challenge of providing innovative responses to the adolescent’s needs.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) are the two fundamental instruments of international law used to specify the rights of adolescent males and females. Inscribed within a spirit of respect for freedom and equality among individuals, they are the conceptual framework surrounding the development of any policy or programme for adolescents in Latin America and the Caribbean. The CRC and the CEDAW enable adolescents of both sexes to be recognized as subjects of rights, allowing for their development as individuals and as citizens within a universalizing culture of human rights (UNICEF- Regional Office, 2000a).

¹ Unless indicated otherwise, the statements by adolescents are from UNICEF-Chile (no date).; CEPECS (1999) and PABÓN, Marta Lucía (1999).

In this context, the present document should be understood as a set of proposals and guidelines to develop a policy for adolescents, fully in accordance with the CRC.

Every country in Latin America and the Caribbean has ratified the CRC and almost all have adapted their legislation to its spirit and text. New legislation in the region defines the child as any human being below the age of 12 or 14 years and the adolescent as any human being between that age and before 18 years of age.

Contrary to the definition of “adolescence” based on the CRC, the term “youth” has different interpretations and covers a much broader population, which can include individuals under 18 years (from 10, 14 or 15 years) and those beyond that age (24, 28 or 30 years). Therefore, it is essential to differentiate between an “adolescent” and a “young person”, and to be aware that the term “young person” is used ambiguously. The concept of “youth” or “young person” in its broadest sense has no legal relevance. And, beyond any semantic differences, its vagueness has programme and policy consequences. In some cases, it **counters** the CRC² and new legislation on children and adolescents, while **overlaying** all legal rules of a national nature intended to govern the various spheres of adult action.

Nevertheless, a number of studies have shown that young people between the ages of 18 and 24 years have considerable influence on the behavior of children and adolescents, besides being an important reference within the family and the community. They are often parents themselves, teachers or are responsible for the care of younger brothers and sisters. UNICEF could use this observation to orient part of its action toward young people, with a view towards generating a change in adolescent behavior.

In addition to the regulatory and policy changes implied by the Convention on the Rights of the Child, there is a demographic reality that obliges today’s societies to address the problems of adolescents. More than one billion of the world’s six billion inhabitants are between 10 and 19 years of age (UNICEF, 2000a). Population forecasts indicate this number will grow significantly in the non-industrialized countries within the next 10 years.

In Latin America and the Caribbean, young people between 10 and 24 years of age account for 30 percent of the entire population; that is, 148 million people. According to estimates, this young

² Particularly when there is an attempt to apply regulations for young adults to adolescents under 18 years, as proposed by those who favour lowering the age of criminal imputability.

population will include 166 million people by the year 2025. The adolescent population (10 to 19 years of age) represents 21 percent of the total population, on average. This proportion varies between 13 and 25 percent, depending on the country (PAHO/Kellogg, 1999).

Growth of the adolescent population in our countries and urbanization of our societies have given rise to problems unknown up to now. An approach to these problems should be based on a critical analysis of the societies in which they occur, while taking care not to reinforce the negative views or perceptions of adolescence. Rather than “stigmatizing” the adolescent, a responsible policy should begin by understanding the causes and the social context in which problems such as school absence and desertion, economic exploitation, unwanted pregnancy and criminal violations occur.

Focusing UNICEF policy on protecting the rights of adolescents coincides with the life-cycle concept, which considers EVERY stage in the lives of children and adolescents. Consequently, the priority on child survival and development during the early years of life and on access to basic education of good quality must be followed by sustained support for adolescents during their gradual entrance into the adult world. As a logical consequence of this concept, UNICEF is committed to focusing its efforts on three essential phases of child and adolescent development (E/ICEF/2000/13):

a) **0-6 years: Early Childhood**

A good start in life, with food, proper care and a healthy environment to enable the child to survive under appropriate conditions for physical health, mental clarity and emotional security.

b) **6-12 years: Childhood**

The opportunity to obtain a full primary education of good quality.

c) **12-18 years: Adolescence**

The opportunity to develop individual skills and abilities in favorable and safe surroundings, so as to enable the adolescent to contribute to and participate in the family, the school, the community and society.



II. Towards a Positive View of Adolescence

Adolescence is a socially construed concept with cultural connotations. Perceptions of children and adolescents, and the way their rights are protected, are rooted in cultural and political realities that vary from country to country. As with any other population, it is difficult to identify characteristics and similarities that define the group as a whole. **Adolescents are not a homogeneous group. What they have in common is age. They live in different circumstances and have different needs.**

A view that is consistent with human rights and based on the life-cycle approach³ contrasts with traditional ideas about adolescence, it regards both adolescents and children as human beings equal in dignity, individuals who, because of their stage in life and their particular development, have specific needs and subjectivities determined by age.

Adolescence is a fabrication of modern societies who see the teenager as being in a pre-productive phase, in preparation for becoming what the social norm dictates; that is, a productive adult with a family and with no debt to society: a “good citizen”. Behind the adolescent's rebellious

³ The *life-cycle* concept underlining the CRC affords children and adolescents a particular value as individuals at a specific stage in life. This supposes a comprehensive view of adolescents in which they are understood as requiring time and space to develop, taking into account their options and regarding them as active and creative subjects, rather than objects of others.

“ *We are breaking patterns...more open to ideas, to doubt, to others, to the unknown, and to finding our own way*
Older people are afraid of change ”



attitude is a search for meanings that goes beyond the model offered by the modern adult world. It is a quest for the value of what is social in their relationship with the environment and transcends market values. More important than production and reproduction is the relationship with friends and peers, affection, love, pleasure, play, music, theater and sports; that is, culture in its broadest sense.

Perhaps the term that best characterizes adolescence is the verb “to depart”: to depart from childhood and home, to depart to search and experiment, to depart with someone and to open oneself to the world beyond the family. Adolescence is the individual’s first ex-

perience with the collective side of life. It is situated, in a particular historical and cultural moment, at the point of contact between at least two generations. From there, it explores the shortcomings, the gaps and the unfulfilled promises of parents, families and societies. Adolescence is at the heart of the conveyance of cultural values and social relations. In this sense, it can be considered a symptom of the contemporary world (RASSIAL, 2000).

Rather than regarding adolescence as a problem, it should be viewed - in policies and programs - as the result of a historic fabrication and a social process. During adolescence, the individual begins to assume an inde-

pendent and autonomous stance in the social milieu. Adolescents today (and children, as well) reject acts of authority dictated by will or whim alone, particularly in the realm of interpersonal relations. In other words, they react against subjective exercise of power when it does not adhere to clear rules or established laws (discretionary power) or when it is contrary to reason or unfair (arbitrariness).

“Adults see us as an ‘open book’
But they don’t say it’s one
they’ve read from back to front,
thinking they’ve already written
the end”

III. Adults and Adolescents: From Conflict to Cooperation⁴

The crisis in traditional models has given rise to two ambiguous and now hegemonic paradigms that dominate the perception of relations between adults and adolescents and, hence, the formulation of governmental and non-governmental policy on adolescence. They are:

- a) **The manipulation paradigm**, characterized by an adult view that projects in adolescents the image adults have of themselves. This view expresses the inability of adults to conceptualize themselves. It also allows them to unload their own responsibility onto adolescents.
- b) **The mystification paradigm**, characterized by a nostalgic and naive view of adolescence and youth, one that highlights and overstates its virtues, while freeing adolescents from any responsibility for their own lives.

In stigmatizing or idealizing adolescence, both paradigms end up being used by adults to manipulate: they either overload adolescents with responsibility or deprive them of their rights⁵.

⁴ Taken from UNICEF - Regional Office, 2000b.

⁵ There is no denying that manipulated and mystified forms of participation are participation all the same. However, non-legitimate is a more appropriate term than non-participation.

There is a third paradigm, one that is as possible as it is necessary: the **cooperation paradigm**. It must be reinforced in response to the discouragement and lack of prospects found among adults and adolescents in times of crisis. It stems from an educational relationship based on respect and recognition of the fact that all human beings are equal in dignity.

As opposed to the idea of symmetry between rights and obligations, which attempts to balance each right acknowledged to adolescents with an obligation, this paradigm calls for the responsibilities demanded of adolescents to respond to the principle of gradual autonomy. As such, the obligations required of adolescents depend on their degree of maturity and on the tools they acquire in life that allow them to assume their obligations effectively. The arithmetic logic of obligations and rights, although founded on rationale, lacks generosity and solidarity, which are two essential principles of the cooperation paradigm.

Programmes and policies centered on participation and "the voice of adolescents" should be framed by a cooperation paradigm. In short,



with the **cooperation paradigm**:

- * **Adults listen to adolescents;**
- * **Adolescents listen to adults;**
- * **Adolescents listen to one other;**
- * **Adults listen to one other.**

Adolescents need adults almost as much as adults need adolescents. Adolescents do not reject adult support or guidance. In fact, they ask for it (although sometimes in a confused and even dramatic way). Nor do adolescents reject authority. What they reject is authoritarianism; that is, authority devoid of reason. Therefore, we must question and debate the mystifying and manipulative perceptions of adolescence and encourage listening, dialogue and cooperation between generations. The CRC is permeated by this same spirit of cross-generational cooperation. Therefore, it governs and reformulates the historically predominant features of children's relationship with adults and with the state. Beginning at the regulatory level, it drastically reduces the legitimate nature of discretionary power in interpersonal relationships and constitutes the central, legal and educational element of the cooperation paradigm.

“ They say: ‘That kid has problems, let him leave.’ We’re always the problem. They don’t see how it relates to them ”

IV. The Voice of Adolescents

The cooperation paradigm, and particularly adolescent participation, is an ethical option for societies that seek to be more democratic and just. Listening to the voice of adolescents and encouraging a dialogue between adolescents and adults demands that we guarantee adolescents an active presence in the various areas of debate and decision on matters of concern to them.

For adolescents, participation implies:

- expressing their opinions freely
- having initiatives and taking part in processes
- evaluating policies, programmes and services to ensure they are designed with their needs and interests in mind

In dialogue between adolescents and adults, no single opinion prevails over the others. Rather, the outcome is a consensus on the part of all. **The voice of adolescents, or their silence, is only part of the problem. The other is the inability of adults to heed that voice or that silence.**

UNICEF is not a factory producing policies for adolescence; its role is to favor and facilitate dialogue and debate. In the cooperation paradigm, these are the elements that lay the course of public policy.

How do we listen? With an open attitude learned from adolescents themselves and without avoiding conflict, whether in public or private; without acting naively in the field of so-called public opinion; and by technically and conceptually improving ways and means to garner the voice of adolescents (through opinion polls, for example).

Where do we listen? First, we listen in the family, at school and in the community. The well-being and development of adolescents depends primarily on the protective environments where they live and their relationship with parents and the other adults who are close to them. Educators, be they parents or teachers, have a fundamental role to play.

Any effort to establish universal policies for adolescents, as well as for effects of UNICEF cooperation programmes, must begin by placing a priority on hearing the voice of adolescents at the place where they congregate and are most easily found; that is, in the school system. Although schools do not always respond to the needs of adolescents, “the only thing better than the school is a better school,” one that offers them prospects. Dialogue and participation in the school would contribute in this respect, as would a larger number and greater plurality of adolescents in the school system. Again, communication between the school and adolescents must be a two-way street. Adolescents cannot be required unilaterally to adapt to a system, if their needs and expectations are not into account.

Why do we listen to adolescents?

First of all, we listen to learn and to nourish the debate among adolescents themselves, between adoles-

cents and adults, and among adults. Open communication is an essential element of democracy. Secondly, we listen to be able to adapt our programmes, campaigns and policies to the outcome of that dialogue, which helps to convert government policies into genuine public policies. **Dialogue between adolescents and adults should not be considered as merely a policy instrument, but as an essential component of policy.**

The opinion of adolescents in general, not just that of specific groups or adolescents at particular risk, is essential and indispensable component of any responsible policy for adolescents. Therefore, building a positive view of adolescence begins with placing a priority on democratic strategies for the participation of all adolescents, so they can be heard in all their plurality.

Opinion polls can be useful for determining what children and adolescents think, what they believe and how they feel, provided the poll is conducted seriously and responsibly, and is based on a reliable methodological design.

When recorded in this way, the voice of adolescents becomes a condition *sine qua non* for determining the crux of any policy designed in their benefit. Yet, opinion polls alone are not enough to formulate policy. **OPINION is a fundamental element of PARTICIPATION but does not constitute a form of participation in itself or on its own.**

There should be a priority on the more prominent issues to emerge from an open and democratic expression of opinions by adolescents, as opposed to a limited and prejudiced view of their problems. This implies diversifying strategies according to the diversity that exists among adolescents, so that formal universality of rights does not ignore social differences or invalidate individual subjectivity.



“ How would we like to be?
Free to decide on our own lives,
equal in rights...
More than imposing an identity on
us, they listen while we search for it ”

V. The Right to Participation⁶

The CRC invites us to give new content to the global concept of citizenship, with children and adolescent citizenship being understood not as voting age or being part of the political system of representation, but as the acquisition of rights that allow young people to express themselves and to become involved in decisions that affect their lives. It implies a new way of thinking, as well as the development of **institutional mechanisms to protect the rights of children and adolescents.**

The CRC specifies the state's responsibility to deal with abuse of power, economic exploitation and social negligence. It also constitutes an ethical frame of reference for protecting the rights of children and adolescents. It establishes their right to participate and to be a party to their own development, to express their opinions freely and to join adults in building democratic and fair societies. Not only does this imply protection of their rights, it also necessitates making room for their voices to be heard and broadening awareness of their needs on the part of the community and society through genuine participatory processes. (UNICEF - Regional Office, 2000a).

Issues of concern to children and adolescents should not be addressed merely from the particular viewpoint of the adult world, at the risk of providing an inadequate response to their needs.

⁶ The document prepared by UNICEF to monitor the World Summit goals for children in the Americas is a particularly important contribution to the issue of participation. It was developed with the support of the Interagency Coordinating Committee (ICC) and presented at the Fifth Ministerial Meeting on Children and Social Policy in the Americas, held in Kingston, Jamaica: **The Participation of Children and Adolescents: Towards a Democratic Society** (UNICEF/ICC, 2000).

a. Why Participation?⁷

“Why can't we take part? They pretend to let us give our opinions, they pass around a questionnaire, and all of a sudden...there's reform”

Democratic participation is a fundamental rights of all citizens. By the same token, it is important to democracy that the populace plays a role in administering and implementing policy. This also implies having an opportunity to participate in the family, the school and the community, from an early age and within a spirit of equality and consensus.

The CRC gives special emphasis to participation by children and adolescents, calling it a fundamental prerequisite for implementing the Convention itself. The right to participation is one of the four general CRC principles identified by the Child Rights Committee as a fundamental value. The others are non-discrimination, the child's best interest, and survival and development.

It is important to distinguish children's participation from that of adolescents. The various ways it can be promoted will depend on age and ability, and on the means each has to express his or her opinion and to influence a decision. Age differences should be a factor in affording space for participation in the family, the school, the community and the state.

Article 12 of the CRC is fundamental to understanding and substantiating the importance of the age group in participatory processes. It establishes the child's right to express his or her views, which are to be given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

Article 13 complements this notion of participation by establishing the right to freedom of expression, including the right to seek, receive and impart information.

⁷ Taken from UNICEF/ICC, 2000.



As Gerison Lansdown indicates, Article 12 of the Convention does not give children and adolescents the right to make decisions without considering the consequences for themselves and for others. Nor does it mean their rights prevail over those of parents. However, it does bring about a radical change in traditional thinking, which held that the interests of children and adolescents should be neither heard nor taken into account (UNICEF - Innocenti, 2000).

In summary, Article 12 of the CRC acknowledges:

1. The capacity of every child to express his or her views, either verbally or through other language forms.
2. Children's right to freedom of expression.
3. The right to be heard in all matters affecting them.
4. The right to have their opinions given due weight in accordance with the age and maturity of the child.

“How can we help but feel powerless? They say one thing and do another. It's so hypocritical”

If the Convention protects these rights it is because actual circumstances show that adults are often unable to listen to children and adolescents.

1. Adults can abuse their power over children.
2. Adults do not always act in the child's best interest.
3. The rights of adults are more and better protected than those of children.
4. Rarely does public policy give consideration to children's interests and the impact these policies have on their lives (UNICEF-Innocenti, 2000)

According to the CRC, children are much more than recipients of services or beneficiaries of protective measures. They are subjects with rights and are to be respected as individuals who are increasingly able to participate in and influence the decisions that affect their lives.

“What I remember most is the day they what I thought... In all my seventy years, I had never been asked that question”

Although the CRC applies to all children, regardless of gender, a close look at this convention, together with the CEDAW, highlights the inequality and discrimination to which girls and female adolescents are subject to. The CEDAW is especially concerned with girl's participation as a way to avoid **gender discrimination**, and specifies

the need for appropriate steps to modify social and cultural behavior patterns that prevent the equitable development of boys and girls and perpetuate stereotyped behavior in men and women (Article 5). Article 7 (b) explicitly stipulates the right of girls and female adolescents to take part in formulating government policy. Article 10 of the CEDAW encourages girl's participation, linking it to their right to education and information.

Both conventions - the CRC and the CEDAW - emphasize and conceptualize the particular importance of the right to participation and its implications. It is considered a fundamental right to supporting and promoting progress towards observance of all other rights.

In the Declaration of the World Summit for Children the right to participation is viewed as a fundamental right for child and adolescent development. The Programme of Action adopted at the International Conference on Population and Development (Cairo, 1994) specifically mentions the adolescent's right to take part in decisions that affect his or her life, particularly those concerning adolescent sexual and reproductive health.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child introduces the legal obligation to respect the views of children and adolescents and to take them into account when formulating policy, implementing action and assessing its results. Respect for children's rights is not an option or an expression of kindness or charity. Children's rights imply obligations and responsibilities that must be fulfilled. They are to be considered an expression of solidarity and equality that empowers children and adolescents to play an active role in improving their situation and in broader processes for social change.

⁸ An elderly Salvadoran woman remembering Monsignor Oscar Arnulfo Romero after his assassination. In the UNIFEM magazine María, María (1998).

The principle of respect for children's views reaffirms the child's full capacity, with the right to be informed and to express his or her opinions freely on all matters affecting the child, and to expect those opinions to be given due weight. It also defines children's right to participate in decision-making processes that concern their lives and to influence decisions that are within the child's authority and are taken in the family, the school and the community.

Autonomous participation: Adolescents are informed and consulted at every stage of the process. They can provide information themselves, acquire commitments and initiate action by common accord with the other concerned parties. With autonomous participation, adolescents are not alone and may seek support and guidance from adults, when required. Autonomous participation implies acknowledging the capacity of adolescents to think for themselves, while acting, at the same time, in a concerted and collective way

b. Types of Participation

The history of children's participation in Latin America is marked by three forms of participation, which can be characterized as non-authentic and non-legitimate.⁹

- a) **Tokenism:** A group of children chosen by a group of adults to represent all children in events organized by adults
- b) **Decorative:** A group of children who sing, dance and display their talents to adults, but are not included when it comes to defining priorities or making decisions
- c) **Manipulative:** A group of children who are puppets for adult ventriloquists, memorizing and repeating a discourse that is not their own and in a language foreign to them

“ Why do they insist we hold elections, if the teachers have already decided who they want to represent the students? ”

Rejecting and exposing these forms of non-authentic, non-legitimate and undemocratic participation through public criticism voiced collectively may be the first step towards dismantling them. They are also passive forms of participation that tend to favor certain types of adolescents because of their ability (the most outstanding or talented, or those with leadership qualities) or stigmatize others because they are in a difficult situation (at the most risk).

Any proposal for genuine participation implies assuming the challenge of listening to and understanding all adolescents. Building a meaningful strategy for authentic and legitimate participation on the part of adolescents cannot be removed from the larger effort of “democratizing democracy,” which is so necessary in this time of crisis and collapse. Therefore, the type of adolescent participation to be promoted for genuine exercise of rights can be called autonomous participation. It is defined as follows.

Autonomous participation: Adolescents are informed and consulted at every stage of the process. They can provide information themselves, acquire commitments and initiate action by common accord with the other concerned parties. With autonomous participation, adolescents are not alone and may seek support and guidance from adults, when required. Autonomous participation implies acknowledging the capacity of adolescents to think for themselves, while acting, at the same time, in a concerted and collective way.¹⁰

⁹ For more information on the types of participation found among children and adolescents, see HART, Roger (1992).

¹⁰ Certain elements of this definition are taken from KRAUSKOPF, Dina (2000), HART, Roger (1992) and Save the Children (2001).

The right to participation should be understood as a process and a result, as well as a strategy to facilitate full exercise of rights. The effectiveness of policies and programmes depends largely on the autonomous and legitimate participation of adolescents, as a guarantee of due consideration for their true interests and needs.

c. Instances for Participation

The instance where participation occurs is just as important as the age group. Broadly speaking, it can be **social** (family, school, associations) or **institutional** (state agencies, political parties).¹¹ In their search for independence, adolescents see their world broaden to include new terrain: from the social to the institutional, from the private (family) to the public (state).

Obviously, the adolescent is more closely related to the social instance than to the institutional instance in the adult world. By regarding the child as a human being at a specific stage of development, his or her participation in social instances (the child's immediate and natural environment for socialization) should be emphasized in the interest of orientation, preparation and provide tools and opportunities to form personal judgments and to be able to function eventually as a full citizen in the privileged spheres of the adult world: politics and the state.

The stage that extends from childhood to adolescence implies increased occupation of public space. In adolescence, the instance for socialization is no longer just the family. It includes the school, groups of friends and the community. The capacity of adolescents for participation becomes more important because of their increased understanding and more direct contact with the public world. Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that adolescents gain new independence, they continue to require support from adults to satisfy their basic needs for survival and development and as guides in finding their own way.

The distinction between instances for participation has its consequences, not only for adolescents but for society in general. It underscores the need to bring the achievements of democracy and citizenship to the more immediate instances occupied by children and adolescents; namely, the family, the school, the neighborhood and youth groups and organizations.

It also affects the bridges adults build to communicate with adolescents. While adolescents can exercise genuine and authentic participation in social instances, at the institutional level, they must limit themselves a fictitious exercise of democracy, either by imitating adults or assimilating ways and means of participation that are foreign to them. Instances for adolescents' participation should allow them to innovate and implement participatory mechanisms that respond to their needs and vision of the world. Consequently, when we speak of adolescent participation we must differentiate between:

¹¹ According to Alessandro Baratta (1999), democracy implies social relations between individuals in two separate dimensions:

1. **The social dimension:** relationship with the institutions in civil society: family, school, associations, social organizations
2. **The institutional dimension:** government institutions or those of an international legal nature: the state, public territorial entities (provinces, towns, neighbourhoods) and institutions pertaining to the international community

These two dimensions can also be characterized as privileged instances for adolescent and adult participation.



- ▶ **Social instances:** those in the adolescent's daily life (family, school, youth clubs, athletic, artistic and ecological groups, etc.)
- ▶ **Institutional instances:** those for learning adult forms of participation, specifically participation in political and public life (political, legal and state institutions).

If this difference is taken into account, adolescents can be encouraged to participate first in **social instances** and later in **institutional instances for adolescents**; that is, in instances reserved traditionally for adults but gradually made available to adolescents for the specific purpose of having their opinions and participation on matters of direct or indirect concern to them (such as Ombudsmen's Offices for Children and Adolescents, governmental and non-governmental projects for adolescents and UNICEF cooperation programmes).

Institutional space should not and cannot replace social space, although the two can complement one another. Drug abuse or the use of violence can be debated by juvenile elections or a youth parliament but not resolved. Instead of inventing new instances, which might be artificial and foreign to adolescents, conflicts should be resolved and channeled where they originate; that is, in the family, at school, in society and in everyday opportunities for interaction with the adult world. It is especially important to make the family and the school privileged scenarios for adolescent participation by ensuring they become more and more inclusive.

As an intermediary between the family and a larger community, the school is crucial as a place where democratic values are learned. Therefore, it should be one of the focuses of policy for adolescents, particularly policy to promote adolescent participation. A **democratic school**¹² should prepare the adolescent to live a responsible life in a free society, in a spirit of solidarity and tolerance, with equality between the sexes, respect for human rights and the environment, and friendship among all peoples, without ethnic, religious or national differences.

¹² School rules should be discussed by the educational community as a whole. This would help to interiorize the rules and provide students with specific experience in applying them fairly.



d. Youth Cultures

Acknowledging the diversity of juvenile expressions is perhaps one of the most important steps towards giving content to adolescent participation and citizenship. When young people say, “What we do is participation as well as citizenship.”¹³ they are expressing the belief that citizenship cannot be restricted to participation through ways and means prearranged by others (political parties, elections, public and territorial organizations).

Exercise of citizen’s rights by adolescents involves cultural expressions that are very specific to them. Through these expressions, adolescents make their voices heard and convey their view of the world.

Exercise of citizen’s rights by adolescents involves cultural expressions that are very specific to them. Through these expressions, adolescents make their voices heard and convey their view of the world.

Beyond election results and opinion polls, young people have their own forms of participation. Through music, dance, graffiti, poetry, theater, alternative journalism, video, electronic games, local or school radio stations, fashion, tattoos and other forms of language characteristic of juvenile cultures, young people make statements about their world. Words and non-verbal communication are the means adolescents use to express their vision of the world. They do so by modifying or distorting common language, or by generating a new realm of signs different in form from adult language.

Music is a central element in youth cultures. Whether they play, listen or dance to music, every group of adolescents and young people identifies with one or more types of music: rock, jazz, heavy metal, hip-hop, hard core punk, techno, salsa, merengue, house, reggae, rap.

“We’re looking for new forms of expression to fulfill ourselves, to find ourselves. They say it’s a waste of time, but it gives us life”

In any genuine attempt by adults to understand the world of adolescents, the cultural rights established in the Convention on the Rights of the Child include not only the preservation of language, religion and original cultural values (Article 30) but free and full participation in cultural life, the arts and recreational activities (Article 31). **Perhaps cultural expressions are crucial for recognizing adolescents and young people as social subjects who, together with other men and women, are capable of building a better and feasible world for all.**

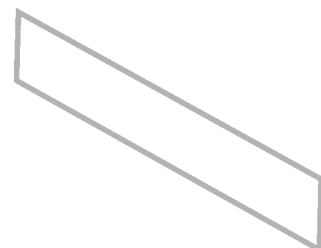
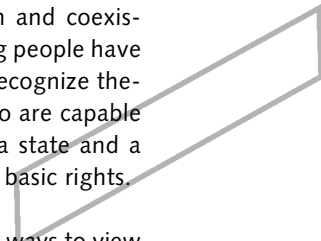
In this area, it is also essential to overcome manipulative or mystifying views of adolescent participation. Beyond stigmatizing or idealizing juvenile expressions, the question is to recognize them as a legitimate voice and the expression of different subjectivities, ones capable of visualizing nonconformity and giving esthetic form to an ethic of their own. For that reason, these expressions are also part of juvenile gangs, groups of hooligans at stadiums and the hordes of young people in bars. Here, the big problem - which young people themselves acknowledge - is affording recognition to cultural expressions other than one’s own.

¹³ UNICEF-Chile (no date).



Youth cultures have a social and political dimension that cannot be ignored. Things are criticized, affirmed and discredited from the standpoint of these cultures; the tensions adolescents and young people experience in their relationship with the environment are accentuated or moderated in them. Nevertheless, they hold the possibility of contending peacefully with the malaise young people experience within a culture. The display of creativity and energy found in the cultural and artistic expressions of young people go beyond the idea of belonging to a particular territory or nation. Youth cultures offer opportunities for participation and coexistence, one in which adolescents and young people have their first collective experiences and can recognize themselves and be recognized as citizens who are capable of assuming a commitment to reinforce a state and a society that protects and safeguards their basic rights.

In this sense, there are two non-conflicting ways to view cultural expressions: as the means to preserve traditions (linguistic and ethnic cultures, religious beliefs), or as the means to reverse and transform traditions (youth cultures). The cultural rights of adolescents guarantee both interpretations.

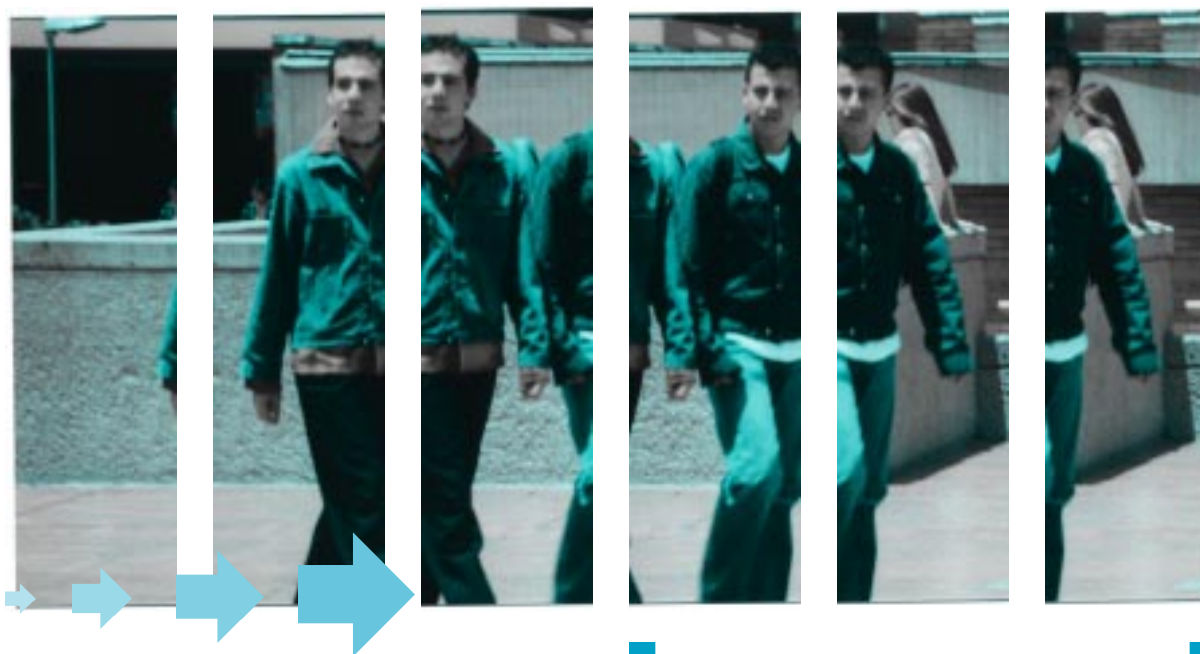


VI. Policies for Adolescents

a. General Guidelines

The rights-based approach lets us conceive of public policy as based on a consensus among the various actors in society and not strictly governmental. In formulating policy of this type, what is public is regarded as space for coordination and consensus between the state and society. In other words, policies for adolescents must be constructed through dialogue between adolescents and adults. As such, they can be classified into two basic groups:

- **Universal policies:** The focus is full development of the individual's capabilities and policies of this type are directed to all adolescents. By regarding adolescents as individuals with rights, universal policies allow measures to be adopted before problems arise. They concentrate on making full exercise of rights a reality for adolescents, through authentic participation.
- **Preventive and protective policies:** Public policy of this type is designed to serve adolescents who are in difficult situations or at risk. This population increases when there are no universal policies or when existing ones fail to do the job. An approach of this type acknowledges difficulties to full exercise of adolescent rights and, therefore, concentrates on restoring rights that have been violated. It is directed to adolescents who are at the greatest risk and leads to compensatory action and protective measures.



In either case - full rights or their restitution - participation is the crux. Without it, policies run the risk of being designed from an adult point of view that fails to meet the needs of the target population.

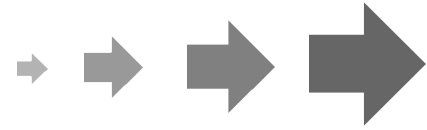
Both types of policy - universal and preventive and protective - must go hand in hand and reinforce one another. If they address only minority groups who are in need of special services or protection, the majority of adolescents will be excluded and the opportunity to prevent risk factors and to strengthen rights for full and active exercise of citizenship is lost. By the same token, if policies do not serve minority groups with special needs, these people will remain at a disadvantage and be unable to access or benefit from universal policies designed to protect their rights.

Latin American and Caribbean countries must broaden the coverage and effectiveness of public policy for children and adolescents. How to universalize public policy by developing sectoral and cross-sectoral strategies is the challenge facing the countries of the region in the next decade.

Latin American and Caribbean countries must broaden the coverage and effectiveness of public policy for children and adolescents. How to universalize public policy by developing sectoral and cross-sectoral strategies is the challenge facing the countries of the region in the next decade.

In short, if adolescents are to realize their full potential they must be able to benefit from policies and programmes with certain **principal objectives**:

1. **Participation in the decisions that affect their lives.**
2. **Access to basic services and opportunities for development.**
3. **Friendly, protective and safe surroundings in which to live.**
4. **Full development of their abilities and talents.**



b. Strategic Work Principles

The adjustment policies applied in the 1980's occasioned a general setback in Latin America and the Caribbean. The situation of adolescents and our critical view of them are directly related to shortcomings in social policy and the turbulence of societies in crisis. The start of the new century has brought signs of a shift towards greater predominance of what is public, with a more active role for the state and its citizens, plus a return to some degree of universality in social policy.

Public policy for adolescents must be consistent with universalization of rights. As opposed to the short-term goals of targeted policies, its priority must be on efforts with a medium and long-term effect on the social structure and on the lives of people, families and each of their members. Policies for **education and health**, and those to strengthen the **family** are the best way to prevent adolescents from being exposed to social risk. Public policy must also serve the more politically and socially sensitive issues, such as **juvenile criminal justice** and **sexual and reproductive health**. Prejudices against adolescents tend to be reinforced by these issues, which makes them crucial to building a positive view of our young people. Finally, the need for expression, energy and creativity particular to this age group makes **artistic and cultural initiatives** a priority incentive for adolescent **participation**.

The six priorities listed below summarize the strategic guidelines for the design of public policy on adolescents in Latin America and the Caribbean:

1. Autonomous participation by adolescents

2. Universalized secondary education

3. Strengthening Families

4. Establishment of juvenile criminal justice systems

5. Promotion of sexual and reproductive health within the framework of human rights

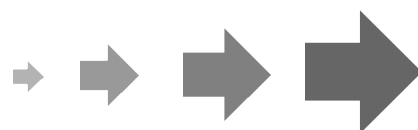
6. Encouragement to creativity and to cultural and artistic expression

The indispensable conditions for developing each of these strategic work lines are explained herein.

1. Autonomous participation by adolescents

In light of what was said earlier, encouraging adolescent participation calls for:

- a) **Discussing and establishing rules** prior to initiating any process for participation. It is also important to consult with adolescents; they must be advised of the forms, scope and limits of their participation.
- b) **Evaluating** each participatory process to highlight the mystifying and manipulative elements: Are adolescent objects, subjects, passive beneficiaries or active subjects of policy? This assessment should include an analysis of the types of participation, its instances, criteria and methodology.
- c) **Setting priorities** in the design and promotion of public policy for adolescents that includes all young people, not just those who are at extreme risk.
- d) Analyzing the effectiveness of national and local **institutions and systems established to protect** the rights of adolescents, promoting the creation or build-up of **Ombudsman Offices for Children and Adolescents**, and encouraging adolescents to participate actively in these agencies.
- e) Encouraging adolescents to take part in **public policy design and implementation** at national and local level.
- f) Enhancing the **mass media's** awareness of the rights of adolescents as a strategy to counter the stigma and negative view of adolescence.



2. Universalized Secondary Education

Although there has been an increase in the coverage of primary and secondary education in Latin America and the Caribbean, **only 47 percent of the region's adolescents attend school** (ECLAC, 1998).¹⁴ Adolescents are pressured constantly by economic factors to abandon the formal school system before completing their education. In the case of males, entry into the job market is one of the main reasons for school desertion. In the case of females, maternity and domestic chores are the predominant reasons. Most working boys drop out of school.¹⁵ Girls who begin to have children at an early age rarely go back to school.

One of the urgent questions is how ensure that adolescents who are not in school (53 percent of the adolescent population) will be able to resume their education in the near future.

It is not enough for schools to be available to adolescents if they do not respond to their needs and expectations, or if they perpetuate authoritarian practices that contradict the student's right to participation and the democratic spirit that should be encouraged in a school where there is respect for the rights of all.


“ I don't know why teachers bother to copy articles on human rights for the school manual on coexistence. None of them are observed in practice and there is nothing we can do about it. We can't express our views, think freely or participate. We can't choose our uniforms or friends either. If it were up to them, we wouldn't even be able to move or breathe ”

Therefore, observance of the adolescent's right to education demands:

- a) **Universalized secondary education**; that is, schooling for all individuals under 18 years of age. This includes:
 - Mass **school enrollment** for adolescents
 - The development of programmes to **reduce desertion and repetition**
 - **Evaluation of school programmes and teaching methods** in conjunction with the students
- b) **Development of mechanisms to protect and guarantee the exercise of rights in school**. This allows for the possibility of claiming rights and denouncing cases involving abuse of power or mistreatment. As one of these mechanisms, **student government** becomes a way to encourage coexistence within the school.

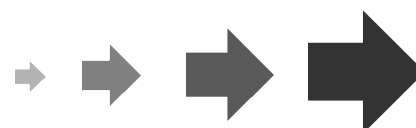
¹⁴ The proportion is 57 percent worldwide. In North America, it is 98.5 percent. In the region, the highest attendance rates are found in the Caribbean countries and the lowest in Guatemala and Haiti.

¹⁵ In the urban areas of Latin America, only 25% of the working adolescent population between the ages of 15 and 17 also attend school. In the rural area, this proportion declines to as low as 15% (ECLAC, 1998).



One of the urgent questions is how ensure that adolescents who are not in school (53 percent of the adolescent population) will be able to resume their education in the near future

- c) **Eradication of work that is dangerous or harmful to adolescents and the elimination of all labour that prevents or interferes with normal schooling.** Protection of working conditions for adolescents must specifically include adolescents who work as domestic employees.
- d) Greater participation and commitment on the part of all who are involved in secondary education: **teachers, school administrators and parents.**
- e) **An improvement in information systems** through reliable quantitative and qualitative indicators that allow for an emphasis on the relationship between education and the work of adolescents.
- f) **A ban on outright or disguised expulsion of pregnant teens and teenage mothers,** as well as all other forms of discrimination.



3. Strengthening Families

The family is the first scenario where the child and the adolescent learn to participate, to know their rights and to respect the rights of others. Many of the difficulties adolescents face are associated with the family's material inability to fulfil its role in providing protection and support. As a result, adolescents are often confronted with the responsibility of supporting the family economically and drop out of school to work or join the ranks of the unemployed.

In extreme cases, which are not infrequent, the family fails to offer protection and is a scenario where adolescents witness or suffer violence. In these instances, the family ceases to be a friendly or welcoming environment and becomes a springboard that propels the adolescent onto the street.

It is also in the family where adolescents build their feminine and masculine identities. In general - and it is important to regard this as a social trend and not as an overly simplified generalization on the behaviour of all men and women - men have been taught to develop their aggressiveness more than women. Conversely, women tend to annul aggressiveness because of their social, family and cultural conditioning. On the other hand, men have more difficulty expressing their emotions than women. They have been socialized to speak in public and to hide their feelings. At times, this can be an obstacle in their personal relations.

“*In our environment, women create a lot of taboos... In the end, we're a lot more concerned about what people will say, than about our own satisfaction or happiness. Men don't have that problem. They can have affairs before getting married and no body cares. But if a woman does, everyone thinks it's terrible*”

These gender differences can produce risk situations for adolescents, both male and female. Women are more dependent on others and have more difficulty protecting themselves. This makes them more vulnerable to violence and abuse. Men may channel their aggression into activities that are destructive to themselves and to others.

As part of an ethic of coexistence, adolescents should develop the ability to protect and defend themselves. Adolescent males should be encouraged to express their emotions through channels other than aggression. Between a woman who can take care of herself and an expressive man who cares for himself and others, there is less risk of self-destructive attitudes or acts of violence or abuse.

One of the cruxes of the problem is that the father, as a positive figure to identify with and a male role model, is culturally very weak. Unlike the mother figure - unconditional and always there - the father is usually regarded as being remote or absent. In general, he plays a very limited role in children's socialization, particularly that of boys, except when required to establish authority (FULLER, 1994, OLAVARRÍA and PARRINI, 1999). This underscores the need to reconstruct masculine role models in a way that offers young men and adolescent boys a positive image of themselves.

Adolescence is a crucial age for departing from the traditional pattern of power between men and women. It is an opportunity for men and women to grow amidst constructive dialogue. Differences and conflicts should not lead adolescents to deepen the fissures in relations between the sexes. On the contrary, they should draw them together in a new type of relationship, one guided by mutual understanding and a desire to know the other person. Naturally, this change must originate within the family and be continued in school, through educational dialogue.



The foregoing helps us to understand the family's importance in the life of an adolescent. To guarantee the adolescent's right to remain in the family environment and to enable families to be a source of happiness rather than suffering, it is essential to encourage public policies for the family that features:

- a) **Support for policies to strengthen families economically and in a material sense**, particularly with respect to employment, income earning, housing, education and health.
- b) **Creation and strengthening of community programmes to support families** in a way that allows the community to protect adolescents in cases of risk or family need.
- c) **Promotion of student scholarship programmes** so families can empower the capabilities of their children and adolescents by sending them to school and keeping them there.
- d) **Encouragement of parental responsibility**, which includes legal acknowledgement of paternity on the part of men, the father's active involvement in raising and educating his children, and a more positive view of masculinity.
- e) **An exchange of cultural models and practices that reinforces gender discrimination** for models based on equality and shared responsibility.
- f) **Application of laws and programmes to counter domestic violence**, accompanied by training in women's and children's rights, ways to prevent violence, and how to resolve conflicts or differences peacefully.
- g) **Application of measures to eradicate social practices abusive to children and adolescents.**
- h) **Training families** to understand and better serve the needs of their adolescents.



4. Establishment of juvenile criminal justice systems

Although the situation of adolescents as victims of violence is relatively well known throughout the region, the bulk of public and political attention in recent years has centered on juvenile delinquency. The media often associates urban violence and insecurity with the adolescent population. However, studies show limited opportunities for jobs and education to be the greatest risk factor in juvenile delinquency. It is not age that prompts adolescents to become involved in illegal or violent activities, but an economic and social context where their possibilities for development are limited (ARRIAGADA and GODOY, 1999).

“I always ask myself: Is jail for punishment or to learn?”

“Instead of insisting on a firm hand, we want equal justice for all. If not, there are no human rights.”

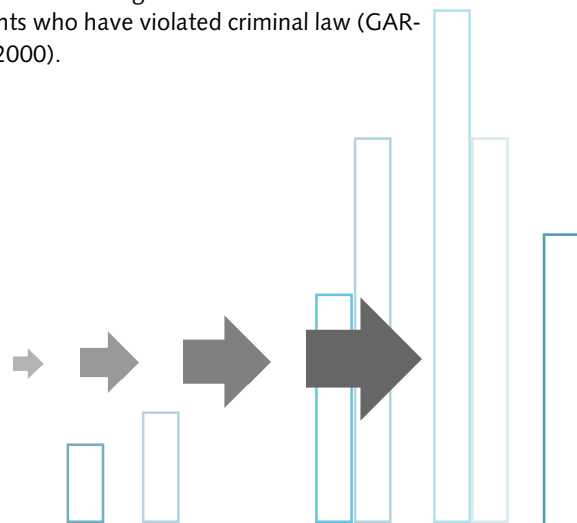
The CRC also marks the beginning of a new era with respect to the criminal responsibility of underage youths. In the legal sphere, the CRC makes a distinction between social problems and criminal violations. The progressive nature of participation, as outlined in Article 12 of the CRC, is derived from a concept of social responsibility

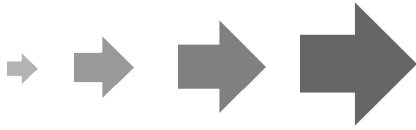
that evolves gradually, in accordance with the age and maturity of the child, to the point where a youth can be held criminally responsible (Articles 37 and 40). To understand the consequences of this change in rule, it is essential to distinguish children from adolescents on the basis of age.

An in-depth analysis of crime in any country will show that crimes committed by adolescents are sporadic and of limited significance. For the most part, they involve theft or damage to public or private property. Therefore, legislating in response to social alarm has its problems and is counterproductive, particularly in the case of adolescents. To begin with, it is difficult to achieve a reasonable response to the vast majority of conflicts. Secondly, the effect is the opposite of what is expected.

In this area, any response on the part of the state or society must have legal, social and educational components. Adolescent criminal offenders are entitled to access to a criminal justice system for juveniles, one that combines delinquency prevention with restoration of justice and reentry into society.

If children are neither responsible nor imputable in the eyes of the law; adolescents are responsible but not criminally imputable. In a legal system of rights and guarantees, adolescent criminal responsibility reduces the margin for subjectivity and discretion in determining socio-educational measures for adolescents who have violated criminal law (GARCIA-MENDEZ, 2000).





Even though adolescents who have contact with the juvenile criminal justice system are a diverse and heterogeneous group, most have been excluded from society due to a lack of policies for integral protection and to insufficient investment in services for children and adolescents.

Systems of juvenile responsibility adapted to the standards set forth in the CRC treat adolescents as individuals with rights and responsibilities, and guarantee the protection of their rights and individual liberties. They regard adolescent offenders as responsible for their acts, without this responsibility being equivalent to that of an adult who has completed his/her development process.

The age at which adolescents are considered responsible (above 12, 13 or 14 years, depending on national law) obeys the supposition that, at this age, the acquisition of responsibility and reasoning power begin to crystallize.

Beyond whatever responsibility adolescents may have for their own actions, a system designed to guarantee rights recognizes that social and economic deprivation (insufficient resources, high rates of unemployment, lack of articulation with community life, etc.) are factors that affect the detention of adolescents who commit crimes, as do police policy and regulations on law and order. For example, a particular juvenile crime rate may indicate greater social need, more impact on the part of the police, or the absence of substantive and procedural guarantees in police action.

Even though adolescents who have contact with the juvenile criminal justice system are a diverse and heterogeneous group, most have been excluded from society due to a lack of policies for integral protection and to insufficient investment in services for children and adolescents.

Accordingly, criminal justice systems for juveniles must have the following as basic premises:

- a) **Amendment of the law** in a way that guarantees children and adolescents the rights set forth in the Convention, by ensuring the de-judicialization of social problems in judicial procedures and leaving deprivation of liberty only as a last resort and for as brief a time as possible.
- b) The institutional reforms necessary to implement criminal justice systems for juveniles.
- c) Training police, judges, social workers, ombudsmen for children, adolescents and the family, and other public servants who are responsible for implementing systems of criminal responsibility.
- d) **Adaptation of conditions for detention to international standards.** In the first place, adolescents are not to be detained with adults and are to be allowed regular contact with their families and afforded the possibility of legal aid. Secondly, they are to be guaranteed access to education, health services, psychological care, food and adequate toilet facilities.

5. Promotion of sexual and reproductive health within the framework of human rights

“For me, it's beautiful to know I'm the first one and, for her, that she's the only one from now on...”

The sexual and reproductive aspects of adolescent health have received far more attention in terms of public policy than other problems related to adolescents. This is due, in part, to the fact that sexual activity often initiates during adolescence.

It is estimated that 50 percent of all adolescents in the region become sexually active before age 17. This, in addition to the limited use of contraceptive methods among adolescents ages 10 to 19, results in a high number of adolescent parents in many countries. The figures show that only one out of ten sexually active, single adolescent males uses some form of contraception. (UNICEF- Regional Office, 1999b).

Even though the adolescent fertility rate has declined in some countries, both the absolute number and the percentage of children born to teenage mothers have increased due to growth in the adolescent population. According to national statistics, **between 20 and 25 percent of women have their first child before age 20.** In rural areas, this proportion is 30 percent (ECLAC, 1998).

Pregnancy implies a risk factor four times greater for adolescent girls than for adult women. As a result, teens are far more exposed to the threat of maternal mortality than adults (UNFPA, 1997). On the other hand, abortion performed under inadequate conditions is one of the leading causes of maternal mortality. Adolescent girls who suffer the consequences of unwanted pregnancy may be tempted to risk their lives and health for this reason (UNFPA, *State of the World Population 2000*).

“We suggest young people wait until marriage to have sexual relations, because their partner might have AIDS...”

“I don't think there are many options. What happens to people who don't want to marry? Do they have to abstain for life?”¹⁶

¹⁶ . In: Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports (1997).

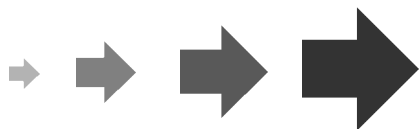


An extension in schooling and the availability of options in life would help to reduce and prevent teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases among adolescents of both sexes. Education broadens life's horizons for women and men alike, and can give them access to information, to health services and to modern family-planning methods.

There are 1,790,000 people in Latin America and the Caribbean who live with HIV/AIDS. Approximately 150,000 of them contracted the virus during the year 2000. Latin America shows diversity in the way the epidemic has evolved and rates of prevalence below those in other regions, but with a tendency to rise. The percentage of people who have contracted the disease is much higher in the Caribbean than in Latin America. In some Caribbean countries, this increase can be characterized as "rapid growth," with the highest rate of HIV/AIDS in the world, after Sub-Saharan Africa. The increase in the number of cases reveals an upward trend among young people (UNAIDS/WHO, 2000; The World Bank, 2000).

Children and adolescents suffer the consequences of the disease, either because they are **infected with** or **affected by** HIV. Besides being exposed to infection, they may suffer the illness and death of their parents, be stigmatized or isolated, and lack adequate care for their families. These consequences are particularly difficult for those affected by poverty and unequal opportunity (UNAIDS/ICC, 2000).

On the other hand, sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children have contributed to the HIV/AIDS epidemic among young people. There are no figures on children and adolescents currently involved in sexual commerce, but it is known that most are female adolescents between the ages of 13 and 18, although they may be even younger in some cases.



An extension in schooling and the availability of options in life would help to reduce and prevent teenage pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases among adolescents of both sexes. Education broadens life's horizons for women and men alike, and can give them access to information, to health services and to modern family-planning methods.

Considering the social and cultural context in which adolescents are raised, it is easy to understand why sex education must be education for life and not merely education to avoid pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases. Because of shortcomings in sex education and in communication with adults, many young people are willing to risk pregnancy or disease rather than jeopardize their reputation with parents or be reprimanded by adults to whom they must turn for an effective method of protection.

Policies on sexual and reproductive health and programmes for adolescent sex education and human development must have at least the following:

- **An integral policy on adolescent health** that includes information, prevention and care, and guarantees confidential service, access to information, psychological counseling and the delivery of condoms.
- **Clarity in communication** and transparency in messages on sexuality for adolescents, particularly on avoiding pregnancy, HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases.

- **Development of programmes for sexual education and human development** as part of the academic curriculum in public and private schools and a component of a joint strategy between the health and education sectors.

- **Expansion in coverage and access to health services for male and female adolescents.** These services must include basic care for safe maternity (during pregnancy, childbirth and puerperium), circulation of information on reproductive health, HIV testing that is free, voluntary and confidential, and access to medication for HIV/AIDS cases and other sexually transmitted diseases (STD).

- **Promotion of young people and adolescents as trainers** in sexual and reproductive health, within the framework of human rights.

- **Training health professionals** on the rights of adolescents.

- **Development of programmes on prevention and care for victims of sexual exploitation and violence.**

- **Mobilization campaigns developed in association with youth groups and organizations of adolescents,** particularly at local level.

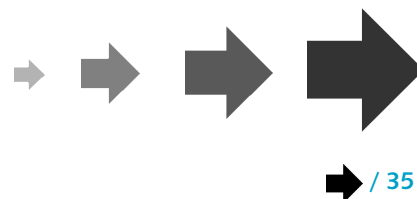
6. Encouragement to creativity, cultural and artistic expression and recreation

“There may be hostility towards a certain kind of music or a certain type of people...For example, we don't listen to some kinds of music because of the lyrics. We can't stand most of the hip-hop groups. They're homophobic, male chauvinists and idiots who are only interested in money...it's just not our thing in terms of esthetics or an approach to art¹⁷”

The chapter on participation highlights the importance of encouraging adolescents to develop cultural expressions of their own. Therefore, public policy for adolescents should include the following elements:

- a) **Stimulus to creativity** and the promotion of cultural, athletic and artistic activities.
- b) **Support for adolescent groups and projects with cultural proposals.** These initiatives are especially effective in programmes on school reinsertion, violence prevention, HIV/AIDS and early pregnancy.
- c) **Promotion of activities designed to recognize cultural heritage and diversity** through meetings and an exchange of experiences. Adolescents in indigenous, African-Latin and African-Caribbean societies throughout the region will benefit especially from initiatives to eliminate discrimination.
- d) **Support for sports and healthy recreation.**

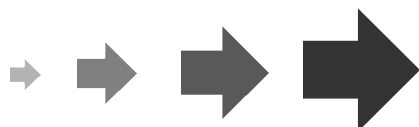
¹⁷ Quoted by Rossana Reguillo, "El lugar desde los márgenes. Músicas e identidades juveniles". In: Universidad Central (2000).

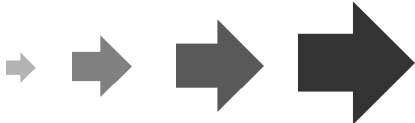


c. BASIC INDICATORS:

What each country should know.

- The definition of adolescence in national legislation (age range)
- The percentage of adolescents in the total population
- The percentage of families with adolescents in their care
- A breakdown of all indicators, according to gender, age group, geographic origin, participation in linguistic and ethnic groups, and socioeconomic level
- The percentage of economically-active adolescents
- The percentage of female adolescents dedicated to domestic labour
- The minimum legal working age
- The minimum age for marriage, by law (men and women)
- The age at which adolescents become sexually active, and the use of adequate protective methods
- The teenage pregnancy rate
- The maternal mortality rate among adolescents and its primary causes
- The number of adolescents living with HIV/AIDS and the prevalence of STD
- A diagnosis of secondary education: enrollment, drop-out rate, learning achievements
- The country's legal provisions for dealing with criminal offenses committed by adolescents
- The number of adolescents who are in conflict with the law: type and seriousness of the offense, the number of adolescents detained, the measures and sentences applied, diversification of information sources (not only the courts, but institutions and programmes)





BIBLIOGRAPHY

ACOSTA VARGAS, Gladys (1998). "La construcción de los Derechos Humanos como forma del ejercicio de la ciudadanía". International Seminar: "Nuestras niñas, derecho la equidad desde la infancia," DIF-PRONAM-SER-UNICEF, Mexico D.F., August 1998.

ARRIAGADA, Irma & GODOY, Lorena (1999). "Seguridad ciudadana y violencia en América Latina: diagnóstico y políticas en los años noventa". ECLAC-Social Development Division, Serie Políticas Sociales, Santiago de Chile.

BARATTA, Alessandro (1999). "Infancia y democracia". In: GARCÍA-MÉNDEZ Emilio & BELOFF Mary (compilers), *Infancia, ley y democracia en América Latina*, Editorial Temis & Ediciones Depalma, Santafé de Bogotá-Buenos Aires.

BELLEI, Christian (no date). "Nota sobre desigualdades de género en el sistema escolar chileno". Consultation for UNICEF-Chile.

BELLEI, Christian (2000). "Educación media y juventud en los 90: Actualizando la vieja promesa". In: *Ultima Década* No. 12, CIDPA, Viña del Mar, Chile.

CEPECS-Youth Defense Office (1999). "Derechos Jóvenes. Jóvenes, conflicto-convivencia y derechos humanos en el ámbito educativo". Serie de Documentos 3. Santafé de Bogotá.

CERBINO, Mauro; CHIRIBOGA, Cinthia; TUTIVÉN, Carlos & MUÑOZ, Germán (April 1998-May 1999). "Culturas juveniles de Guayaquil". Programa del Muchacho Trabajador, Banco Central del Ecuador, Guayaquil, Ecuador.

ECLAC (1993). *Social Panorama of Latin America*. United Nations, Santiago de Chile.

ECLAC (1997-1998). *Social Panorama of Latin America*. United Nations, Santiago de Chile.

ECLAC (1998). *Social Panorama of Latin America*. United Nations, Santiago de Chile.

ECLAC (1999-2000). *Social Panorama of Latin America*. United Nations, Santiago de Chile.

FULLER, Norma (1994). "Acerca de la polaridad Marianismo-Machismo". In: PAHO & W.

K. Kellogg Foundation (1998). *Adolescencia al día*, Volume III, Reprint of articles by various authors.

GARCÍA-MÉNDEZ, Emilio (1998). "Infancia: De los derechos y de la justicia". Editores del Puerto, Buenos Aires.

GARCÍA-MÉNDEZ, Emilio (2000). "Adolescentes y responsabilidad penal: un debate latinoamericano". Buenos Aires-Belo Horizonte, unpublished.

HAMMARBERG, Thomas (1997). "La Escuela y los Derechos del Niño". Innocenti Lectures, UNICEF- International Child Development Center, Florence-Italy.

HART, Roger (1992). *Children's Participation: From Tokenism to Citizenship*. UNICEF/Innocenti Essay No. 4. Florence, Italy.

Human Rights Watch (1999). "Promesas rotas". Assessment of children's rights on occasion of the tenth anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

KRAUSKOPF, Dina (2000). "Participación social y desarrollo en la adolescencia". UNFPA, Costa Rica.

MENSCH, Barbara S.; BRUCE, Judith; GREENE, Margaret E. (1998). "The Uncharted Passage: Girls' Adolescence in the Developing World". Population Council, New York

Ministry of Culture, Youth and Sports -National Youth Movement (1997). "La sexualidad en las voces de la juventud". San José, Costa Rica.

Ministry of Public Health and Social Assistance - Division of Integral Health Care for Adolescents (1999). "De adolescentes para adolescentes: Manual de Salud Sexual y Reproductiva". San Salvador, El Salvador.

MORLACHETTI, Alejandro, J.D., LL.M. (1999). "Situación actual: Obligaciones de Latinoamérica y el Caribe ante el derecho internacional de adolescentes y jóvenes". Pan American Health Organization, Pan-American Health Office -Regional Office of the World Health Organization, W. K. Kellogg Foundation.

OLAVARRÍA, José & PARRINI, Rodrigo (1999). "Los padres adolescentes/jóvenes. Hombres adolescentes y jóvenes frente al embarazo y nacimiento de un/a hijo/a". FLACSO- Chile Headquarters & UNICEF-Chile, Santiago de Chile.

Ombudsman's Office (2000). "La niñez y sus derechos. Niñez infractora en Colombia". Bulletin No. 6, Santafé de Bogotá, Colombia.

PABÓN C., Marta Lucía (1999). "Adolescencia y juventud, vidas en construcción. Guía para orientar el trabajo en materia de sexualidad y derechos de los y las jóvenes desde una perspectiva de género". Prepared for UNICEF-Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, Santafé de Bogotá.

PAHO (1998). "Plan de Acción de Desarrollo y Salud de Adolescentes y Jóvenes en las Américas 1998-2001". Text prepared by the Department of Promotion and Protection of Health/Family Health and Population Programme, Washington D. C.

PAHO & W. K. Kellogg Foundation (1998). *Adolescencia al día*, Volume III, Reprint of articles by various authors.

PAHO & W. K. Kellogg Foundation (1999). "El ambiente legislativo y de políticas relacionado con la salud del adolescente en América Latina y el Caribe". A study by Rosalía Rodríguez-García, Jill S. Russell, Matilde Maddaleno and Mariana Kastrinakis, Washington D.C.

PORTILLO, José; MARTÍNEZ, Jorge; BANFI, María Luisa (Comp.) (1991). "La adolescencia". School of Medicine, UNFPA, PAHO/WHO, Ediciones de la Banda Oriental, Montevideo, Uruguay.

RASSIAL, Jean-Jacques (Sous la direction de) (2000). "Sortir: l'opération adolescente". Éditions Érès, Collection Le Bachelier, Toulouse.

Save the Children (2001). "The Right to Participate. A Working Paper on Child Participation". Toronto, Canada.

STERN, Claudio (1996). "El embarazo en la adolescencia como problema público: una visión crítica". In: PAHO & W. K. Kellogg Foun-

dition (1998). *Adolescencia al día*. Volume III, Reprint of articles by various authors.

UNAIDS (2000). "Report on the Global HIV/AIDS Epidemic - June 2000". Geneva.

UNAIDS (1999). "Escucha, aprende y vive. Con los niños y los jóvenes en campaña contra el SIDA". World Campaign Against AIDS, Geneva.

UNAIDS/ICC (2000). "El VIH y el SIDA en América Latina y el Caribe: Llamado a proteger nuestra juventud". Document presented at the Fifth Ministerial Meeting on Children and Social Policy in the Americas, Kingston, Jamaica, October 9-13, Prepared by UNAIDS with support from the Inter-agency Coordinating Committee (ICC).

UNAIDS/WHO (2000). "La epidemia de SIDA: Situación en diciembre de 2000". Geneva.

UNAIDS (2000). "Los varones y el SIDA: Un enfoque basado en consideraciones de género". World Campaign Against AIDS, Geneva.

UNESCO (1997). "The Major Project of Education in Latin America and

the Caribbean". *Bulletin 43*, Regional Office for Education in Latin America and the Caribbean, Santiago, Chile.

UNFPA (1997). "Informe de la Reunión Regional sobre Salud Sexual y Reproductiva de los Adolescentes en América Latina". San José, Costa Rica.

UNFPA (2000). *Estado de la Población Mundial*.

UNFPA (1997). "UNFPA and adolescents". http://www.unfpa.org/icpd/round%26meetings/ny_adolescent/reports/aloles.htm

UNICEF (1997). "Youth Health For A Change". A UNICEF Notebook on Programming for Young People's Health and Development", New York.

UNICEF (revised 22.09.98). "Adolescents – A UNICEF 2000+ Agenda for Action". Executive Overview.

UNICEF (1999). "Por un cambio en la salud de la población adolescente". A UNICEF Notebook on Programming for Young People's Health and Development". Spanish version.

UNICEF (2000)a. *The State of the World's Children*. New York, Geneva.

UNICEF (2000)b. "Emerging Issues for Children in the Twenty-first Century". E/ICEF/2000/13, Executive Board, Annual Session 2000, 22-26 May.

UNICEF-CAO (2000). "Summary Notes from the Adolescent Policy Development Meeting". Port of Spain, Trinidad.

UNICEF/ICC (2000). "La participación de los niños y los adolescentes: Hacia una sociedad democrática". Document presented at the Fifth Ministerial Meeting on Children and Social Policy in the Americas, Kingston, Jamaica, October 9-13. Prepared by UNICEF- Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, with the support of the Interagency Coordinating Committee (ICC).

UNICEF-Chile (no date). "100 de una: Encuentro de jóvenes *Yo me tomo la palabra*". Santiago.

UNICEF-Innocenti Research Centre (2000). "Promoting Children's Participation in Democratic Decision-Making". Prepared by Gerison Landsdown.

UNICEF-Programme Division (1999). "Youth Participation: UNICEF's Experience Working with Young People". Programme Experience Series.

UNICEF- Regional Office (1999)a. "Adolescents: Perspectives for the LAC Region". Preliminary draft.

UNICEF- Regional Office (1999)b. "Maternal Mortality: A Strategy for its Reduction in Latin America and The Caribbean." A Regional Position Paper.

UNICEF- Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (1999)c. "Detengamos la violencia contra la niña y la adolescente". Interagency Campaign for the Rights of Women and Girls.

UNICEF- Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean (1999)d. "La voz de los niños, niñas y adolescentes de América Latina y el Caribe". Regional survey. Santafé de Bogotá.

UNICEF- Regional Office (2000)a. "La Convención sobre los Derechos del Niño (CDN) y la Convención sobre la Eliminación de Todas las Formas de Discriminación contra la Mujer (CEDAW): Nuevas bases para la formulación de políticas públicas". VIII Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean, ECLAC, Lima, Peru.

UNICEF- Regional Office (2000)b. "Elementos para orientar una política para la adolescencia en América Latina". Internal discussion paper. Bogotá, February 2000.

UNICEF/UAM (1999). "Infancia y política social". UNICEF- Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean and the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, compiled by Suman Bhattacharjea, Mexico D. F.

Universidad Central (Octubre de 2000). "La singularidad de lo juvenil". *Nómadas* No. 13, Magazine published by the Research Department, Bogotá.

VARELA Karla (1999). "Delincuencia juvenil y seguridad ciudadana. Reflexiones a la luz de la experiencia salvadoreña". Joint Meeting of Focal Points on Gender, Children's Rights and Communication, UNICEF Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean, Bogotá.

WHO (1997). "Coming of Age: From Facts to Action for Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health". Adolescent Health and Development Programme, Family and Reproductive Health, World Health Organization, Geneva, Switzerland.

WORLD BANK (2000). "HIV/AIDS in the Caribbean: Issues and Options". A background report.



**Regional Office
for Latin America
and the Caribbean**

Printed in Bogotá - Colombia

December 2001