STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE
and details on the Seminar

INTERVIEWS
with leaders and inspirational stories

WORKSHOPS FOR EMPOWERMENT
Public hearing in the National Congress

CLAIMS
AND COMMITMENTS
AGENDA

STRATEGIES FOR
Girls’ Empowerment

2015 ACTIONS

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40 How was the Seminar?
Yes, girls can cry out for equality, unite in the name of a common cause, and meet to discuss new approaches for empowerment. It is what happened in Brasilia, from November 17th to 19th, during the II International Seminar on Girls’ Empowerment, which took place in light of the celebration of the 25th anniversary of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. In total 70 girls, aged 13 to 19, from Brazil, Ecuador, Guatemala, Jamaica and Mexico, joined their voices during the meeting, which was organized by the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), at the Allia Gran Hotel Brasilia Suites, in Brazil’s capital city.
What was the purpose of the event?

To foster empowerment opportunities for young female participants; to provide a place where young leadership could be exercised, as well as a platform for the discussion of gender equality proposals, participation, expression of regional diversity, learning and exhibition of ideas; to give voice to these girls and encourage them to share experiences, desires, fears, expectations, dreams and challenges.

Female adolescents participated in this environment of exchange; girls whose stories often stumbled upon gender, racial, social and sexual orientation prejudice, or even poverty and/or geographic issues. The event also counted with the participation of female leaders with inspiring life histories, public policy and/or social project managers in Brazil in order to ensure participating countries, parliamentarians, political figures, celebrities and athletes.

Context

Initiatives aimed at the empowerment of girls are a matter of social justice and recognition of their rights. They are sustained by international human rights treaties, which are legally binding for signatory countries, and by political commitments such as the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), the Cairo and Beijing Platforms for Action +5 and +10, the Belém do Pará Convention, and the Iberoamerican Convention on the Rights of Youth (ICRY), among others. These establish specific guidelines in order to fulfill the commitments agreed on by the participating countries. Therefore, it is the obligation of each State to recognize and ensure that girls, like all human beings, are able to fully exercise their rights.

Discrimination and cultural practices that harm girls’ development vary according to their context. In Brazil, the research project ‘Because I am a Girl: Growing Up Between Rights and Violence’, developed by Plan International in 2013, has demonstrated that one in five girls knows another that has already suffered violence, and that 70.7% of girls “have never heard of” or “have heard of, but did not read” the Brazilian Child and Adolescent Statute (ECA). Hence, it is essential that different sectors of governments, institutions, civil society organizations and social movements work together so that girls can exercise their right to participate and contribute from early on to the strengthening of democracy. In order to ensure that this opportunity drives results, it is essential to invest in knowledge for young female leaders concerning their rights and educate them with important values for the development of a society that is more democratic, equal and which respects diversity.

In this context, the deadline for achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) until 2015 has led to the necessity of accelerating the efforts to empower girls and promote gender equality. This issue is present in the debates for building up the Post-2015 Development Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. As part of this international mobilization, UNICEF began implementing its program Promoting Gender Equality – Girls of Today, Women of Tomorrow, of which one of the components is the II International Seminar on Girls’ Empowerment.

The event was held in partnership with the Secretariat of Human Rights (SDH/PR), Plan International, the International Institute for the Development of Citizenship (IIDAC), Superintendent of Women Policies of Salvador and the Municipal Fund for Human Development and Educational Inclusion of Afro-descendent Women (FIEMA) of the Municipal Secretary
"I remember that when I went surfing there were no girls, only men, and I was there. Then, I took part in a championship in which only men participated and I was the only woman. During the championship, many asked me what I was doing there."

(NICOLE PACELLI, 23, FIRST WOMAN IN THE WORLD TO WIN THE STAND UP WORLD TOUR IN THE WAVE CATEGORY, IN LA TORCHE, FRANCE)
of Education (SMED) of Salvador’s City Hall. Other participants were representatives of the Ministries of Health, Education, Social Development, Foreign Affairs, Secretariat of Policies for Women (SPM) and the Special Secretariat of Policies to Promote Race Equality (SEPPIR), and representatives of the Embassies of Sweden, Jamaica, Ecuador, UN Women and UNAIDS.
Strategic Objectives

The seminar had the following objectives: to create a girls’ empowerment agenda designed by the participants, taking into account their claims to promote gender equality in their homes, communities, countries and worldwide; define strategies to strengthen girls’ leadership roles in formal and informal spaces for participation of young people; promote dialogue between participants and policy makers about programs and policies to promote girls’ empowerment; promote the exchange of experiences among Brazilian public sector managers and those from the invited countries and to define partnership strategies on gender equality.

The first concrete action of UNICEF and its partners to promote girls’ empowerment took place in April 2013, during the I Brazil-USA International Seminar on Girls’ Empowerment, when 80 girls aged 13 to 17 from Brazil, Chile, United States, Mexico and Uruguay met in Rio de Janeiro to discuss strategies to ensure the rights of girls through social participation. In this occasion, the participants wrote the “Manifest of Rio” letter, in which they established their commitment to promote actions on girls’ empowerment in their municipalities, through education and the mobilization of their peers. They also notified the authorities from their countries about their main concerns and demands.

The second step of this movement was the meeting held in November 2014, in Brasilia. On this occasion, the participants’ demands were collected and now integrate the agenda that will also provide the basis for the preparation of the Action Plan for 2015. Policy makers were also committed to supporting girls’ empowerment in several areas. Within these areas, some especially stand out: identify and exchange information about good practices; introduce the issue of gender equality into public policy with an intersectoral approach; and engage girls in group discussions, programs and institutional actions. Another outcome of the meeting was the definition of strategies to guarantee the sustainability of actions that contribute to girls’ empowerment and gender equality.
The engagement of young leadership was strengthened even before the seminar. The participants received training materials during the month preceding the event, such as: a Portuguese language version of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), printed and distributed by UNICEF, as well as the Beijing Declaration and other materials about gender issues. The training provided before the event promoted wide integration and useful exchanges among the participants. This positive atmosphere continued during the welcome activities, the integration dynamics, and the presentation of participants and meeting objectives, which focused on materials regarding the Beijing Declaration and the CEDAW.

On the morning of the first day, girls and managers carried out the preparatory workshops for the talk show that would take place in that afternoon, where the girls interviewed authorities, celebrities and opinion leaders about girls’ empowerment strategies. The questions directed to participants were varied, but all of them had the same focus: the end of gender inequality and the empowerment of girls and women.

Participants prepared questions to interview the following guests at the talk show: Gary Stahl, UNICEF Representative in Brazil; Vera Soares, Secretary of Institutional Coordination and Thematic Actions, Secretariat of Policies for Women (SPM); Minister Milton Rondó, General Coordinator of International Action Against Hunger (CGFome) of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; Pilar Chuc Mellado, Coordinator of the Gender and Indigenous Peoples Unit of Guatemala’s Ministry of Social Development; Thereza de Lamare Franco Netto, Coordinator of the Adolescents’ Health Sector of the Ministry of Health; Nicola Cousins, Technical Officer of the Enabling Environment and Human Rights Unit, Ministry of Health of Jamaica; Maria Silvia Aguirre Homes, Coordinator of the Gender Equality Unit, Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport of Mexico; and Rose Rozendo, manager of the Municipal Fund for Economic Development and Educational Inclusion of Afro-descendant...
"I was born prematurely, with a visual impairment. I attended school with a lot of difficulties. Even so, I was able to get into college. I started to swim at the age of three and became a professional athlete, participated in events, competitions and the Paralympic Games. I won some world championships and medals."

(Fabiana Sugimori, 34, swimmer)
Women (FIEMA) of the Municipal Secretariat of Education (SMED) of Salvador City Hall.

Among the issues addressed in the talk show, the problems that incite gender inequalities in Brazil should be highlighted such as the vulnerability of girls and even the way in which Brazilian society sees them. Other specific topics such as the situation of minority groups, those who live in poverty and those who lack empowerment, were also addressed. These factors are added to various forms of violence in and outside families and to the fact that women occupy few positions of power.

What follows are some of the questions and answers of the talk show:

"What is the role of the Secretariat of Policies for Women (SPM) on girls’ empowerment?"

Vera Soares, Secretary of Institutional Coordination and Thematic Actions, SPM, gave the following response: To articulate and integrate government policies so that consideration is given to gender inequality; raise the rights of girls, children and adolescents to a status of equity; consolidate dialogue channels with society so that forms of violence can be remedied, creating surveillance channels in society; and strengthen girls’ networks.

In the matter of indigenous peoples, many questions were addressed to Pilar Chuc Mellado, Coordinator of the Gender and Indigenous Peoples Unit of Guatemala’s Ministry of Social Development. She believes that the discrimination amongst indigenous peoples is widespread, especially gender discrimination. One of the most difficult aspects identified by Pilar was the access to education for indigenous women.

To Nicola Cousins, Technical Officer of the Enabling Environment and Human Rights Unit of Jamaica’s Ministry of Health, many questions were made related to the work accomplished with HIV infected young people. In Jamaica, policies have not managed to remedy the sexual exploitation scenario. Their main goal is to overcome this situation. She provided further examples of continuous actions such as access to contraceptive methods, without reprisals, partnerships with the third sector and civil society organizations, and the creation of shelters to host young people.

In Mexico, the work for girls’ empowerment takes place in school. According to Maria Silvia Aguirre Laredo, Coordinator of the Gender Equality Unit of Mexico’s Ministry of Education, Culture and Sport, the educational policy with a gender approach in the county was introduced in the 90’s, as part of the struggle against gender inequality. It involved a wide production of work on gender and incorporated programs involved in this issue. Currently, the schooling level for women and men has reached significant equality in the country. However, there is still room for insecurity and discrimination against women in schools, including a higher vulnerability in case of pregnancy. At the core of this struggle, in order to lead to gender equality, it is necessary the revision of power relationships as well as a cultural transformation.

Rose Rozendo, manager of the Municipal Fund for Economic Development and Educational Inclusion of Afro-descendent Women (FIEMA) of the Municipal Secretariat of Education (SMED) of Salvador City Hall, presented the local perspective. Rozendo explained that 53% of the illiterate population of Salvador is of Afro-descendant origin. Due to this reason, she explained that the fund was created based on three axes: economic independence for women; elimination of violence against women, and training of municipal school teachers. For her, the biggest challenge is being a woman and being black, hence the importance of empowering girls in all spheres.
"WHAT ALWAYS INSPIRED ME TO MOVE FORWARD, REGARDLESS OF WHAT WAS HAPPENING OUTSIDE OF ME, WAS THAT I WAS SURE OF WHO I AM: I AM LIFE! DISCOVER WHO YOU ARE."

(JOY CRAWFORD, PROGRAM DIRECTOR OF THE EVE FOR LIFE NGO, JAMAICA)
Inspiring stories

After the talk show, testimonials of girls and female leaders in politics, sports, arts and social movements were heard. Among the women who told their stories, touching, enchanting and inspiring the audience, were: the former Federal Deputy Rita Camata, who reached the National Congress despite all of the sexist barriers that she faced along her way; Alison Roofe, Ambassador of Jamaica, who achieved a prominent position in her country’s diplomacy; Joy Crawford, program and training director of the Eve for Life NGO in Jamaica, that struggles to ensure a decent future for the girls of her country; the Paralympic swimmer Fabiana Sugimori, who transformed her visual impairment into a ladder to overcome difficulties; and the surfer Nicole Pacelli, who overcame prejudice against women in the world of surfing and became a champion.

The singer Negra Li spoke about her discipline and perseverance, and her struggle to succeed in her artistic career as a black woman born in a violent slum; the journalist Eliane Trindade, of the Folha de São Paulo newspaper, author of the book ‘Girls on the Corner’ (‘Meninas da Esquina’), brought up the issue of sexual exploitation; Maryule Damas, an adolescent from the Semiarid region (Espírito Santo), spoke of her fight against prejudice for being visually impaired; and the young girl Simone Nascimento, a university student and activist within the black movement (São Paulo), talked about her grit and determination, which led her to become a university student. Stories of strength and courage, in which all of them overcame obstacles currently faced by many other girls that were also present, showing them that with strength, discipline and persistence, it is possible to overcome even the worst adversities.
“ONE OF THE CHALLENGES I FACED WAS ENTERING UNIVERSITY, THAT IS A PRIVILEGED SPACE FOR THE WHITE AND RICH. I ENTERED THE CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY OF SÃO PAULO (PUC-SP) ON A PROUNI SCHOLARSHIP. AFTER GETTING INTO UNIVERSITY I HAVE ENCOUNTERED MORE CHALLENGES, BECAUSE BEING ABLE TO STAY IN A PRIVATE SCHOOL IS VERY DIFFICULT.”

(SIMONE NASCIMENTO, UNDERGRADUATE STUDENT AND ACTIVIST WITHIN THE BLACK MOVEMENT OF SÃO PAULO)
The workshops took place on the morning of the 18th, with the objective of acquiring knowledge about girls’ empowerment and advocate for the cause. In the girls’ workshop the following topics were discussed: communication and gender, racial identity, gender sensitization, gender and public policies, stereotypes and violence, HIV/AIDS, and human rights. While the girls were divided into groups, the managers, in a separate room, presented policies to promote girls’ rights through empowerment.

During the afternoon, participants moved to the Chamber of Deputies for a public hearing in the Foreign Affairs Commission, with the objective of evaluating the Brazilian outcomes regarding the MDGs set up by the United Nations for the period 2000-2015 and the outlining of actions for the post-2015 period. The spokesperson of the seminar in the public hearing was young Rita dos Santos Silva, from the indigenous Potiguara people of the municipality of Baía da Traição (Paraíba), and the young Guatemalan Gilda Menchú Tzun, from the Maya K’ich’e ethnic group; both members of networks of indigenous people. They presented the demands and claims of the girls and spoke about the importance of female political participation and the need to share good practices among all states to promote girls’ empowerment.

The session was moderated by Congressman Eduardo Barbosa (PSDB/MG). The Ambassador, Under-Secretary General for Energy, Science and Technology of the Foreign Affairs Ministry, José Antônio Marcondes de Carvalho; Secretary Mario Gustavo Mottin, from the General Coordination of Sustainable Development of the Foreign Affairs Ministry, the Inter-Ministerial Working Group on the Post-2015 Agenda; the coordinator of the UNICEF South-South Cooperation Programme in Brazil, Michelle Barron; and the Coordinator of the João Pinheiro Foundation in Minas Gerais (MG), Maria Luiza de Aguiar Marques, were also present. At the end of the session, a question-and-answer session was held, in which, among several participants, the adolescent Juliana da Silva Lima, from the JUVA network, touched all of the participants with the maturity of her intervention.

Following the Chamber of Deputies, there was an excursion, followed by dinner and a party.
Claims and commitments

On the 19th, the girls listed claims and strategies, from which the agenda was built. The managers discussed commitments and strategies, partnership possibilities and continuity plans, in order to make a difference in the life of girls all around the world. At the conclusion of the session, both groups shared the results of their work, followed by a question-and-answer session.
Alison Roote, Ambassador of Jamaica, presented in her speech ten steps which she deemed important in order for today’s girls to overcome difficulties and become empowered women:

1. Develop good values: ethics, justice, integrity and, especially, as young people, allow society to see you as people with integrity.
2. Have good family relationships and a support system that stimulates and influence your growth.
3. Invest in your future now. Education is an investment. Education is essential.
4. Pursue realistic challenges. Dream and see possibilities and strategies to reach your goals.
5. Spirituality is very important in order for a person to be centered, and it also helps you believe that there is a way to overcome difficult times.
6. Find happiness in simple things.
7. Find harmony with nature.
8. Learn from your mistakes and seek the ability to stand up again, despite your mistakes. Without solid foundations based on your achievements and the resilience to overcome difficulties, success can vanish quickly, especially for women.
9. Try to be the best in whatever you do, but do not be too demanding of yourself. Be great in doing what you love.
10. Find an older person to be your mentor. Learn from this person, as they will have plenty to teach you. By doing so, you will have a better and brighter future, and all of you can.
The seminar is a gateway, a link in a much larger chain of achievements, in a quest for conquests. Therefore, it is of extreme importance to act, but in order to do so, strategies are needed, issues on which to work on, and an agenda of priorities. Thus, for girls, it is necessary to strengthen their presence in the political sphere and to take the rights agenda that they stand up for to Councils, Secretariats and other rights forums.

In this context, it is also crucial, for example, to have political capacity-building meetings for girls, because, after all, educated leaders can achieve more. For them, it is essential that spaces for participation of female adolescents and even children exist, so that they can learn about women’s rights from a young age. These meetings can also include various public policies geared towards education, health, culture, sports, etc. allowing them to speak, expose their ideas and act. They also commented on the importance of passing on the knowledge generated in forums and public spaces; setting deadlines for the results obtained; sharing profiles and experiences to mobilize more girls and boys for empowerment; the appointment of an ombudsman to report or ask questions; sending mobile phone text messages to initiate anonymous questions and answers; and the dissemination of information via radio and television; always giving a voice to the girls. The participants agreed that it would be very interesting if there was a public notice for girls’ empowerment, as a way to finance their actions.

The girls also want the existing departments related to women’s issues to be more effective and used to guarantee the protection of rights. Furthermore, they expressed their desire to see women’s offices and police stations in cities being strengthened and starting to address issues that concern girls. They also asked for a basic right, which is still not respected today: equality at work.

"WITHOUT A DOUBT, LATIN AMERICA NEEDS MORE WOMEN IN POLITICS, IT IS OUR RIGHT. I DREAM THAT WHEN I GROW UP AND COME BACK TO BRAZIL I CAN SPEAK IN THIS FORUM AGAIN AND WE WILL BE BETTER REPRESENTED."

(PASSAGE FROM GILDA MENCHU TZUN’S, 14, SPEECH, FROM GUATEMALA, IN THE NATIONAL CONGRESS)
Regarding racial identity and gender, it was concluded that a social, cultural and political construction of recognition and valuing of racial diversity is necessary, and it is essential to show the value of the Afro-Brazilian culture as a way to defeat prejudice and to strengthen the importance of ethnic and racial identity. It is just as important to show the girls how beneficial it is to accept and value their own race, and break up some stereotypes endorsed by society, such as judging women by clothing, behavior and/or style.

In education, they highlighted the need to strengthen public policies concerning the inclusion of ethnic groups in universities, and to value cultural diversity and the African-indigenous culture. Girls also discussed the need to disseminate in Brazilian schools the history from rural areas, black and indigenous populations, and from women leaders, in order to show the cultural and ethnic richness of the nation, and the strength of women in different moments and movements of the country, both in national and regional contexts.

For health, it is critical to carry out activities in communities, schools and health clinics in order to spread information on HIV/AIDS and on women’s rights. Reaching an end to prejudice against people with HIV/AIDS is another battle to be faced.

The need to take education on this topic to indigenous villages, enabling prevention in more remote locations, was also considered. The necessity to support the inclusion of girls with disabilities in different spaces concerning education, sports, politics and leisure was also emphasized.

Another issue raised by participants was the exposure of women in the media, and the image created by the mass media. Therefore, the agenda includes the creation and regulation of an agency to evaluate media content in relation to women, so that the images displayed in the media really represent and value the diversity of Brazilian women.

Harassment, regardless of the type, was also included in the debates and on the agenda. The main points are combating all forms of harassment in the streets, work, home, school, etc. and the equal appreciation of girls and boys in the family environment. In this sense, it was suggested to encourage girls to occupy political spaces, to support the exercise of women’s sexual and reproductive rights and to increase access to information; all of which contribute to the fight against any type of violence concerning women and sexual exploitation.

Finally, the girls recommend more events like the seminar to bring knowledge to other girls and boys. They also identified the need for workshops in communities and schools to disseminate the knowledge acquired during the seminar. It was also suggested that through schools, mothers and fathers should be informed about girls’ empowerment.
“I was discriminated against for being visually impaired. Today, I believe I achieved many things. I am in my second year of High School, I am undertaking a computer course, and I plan to have a career as a computer specialist. The message I am sending to you is that I go where the wind takes me…”

(Maryule Damas, 16, Nucleus for Adolescent Citizenship in the Brazilian Semiarid)
FOR THE RIGHT!

TO PLAY WITH TOY CARS.
TO EXPRESS OPINION!
TO BETTER HEALTH CONDITIONS.
TO HAVE RIGHTS.
TO BE WHATEVER I WANT TO BE!
TO EQUAL TREATMENT IN SPORT
AND GENDER EQUALITY.
TO BE A GIRL!
TO COMMUNICATE!
TO LIVE TOGETHER IN SOCIETY
WITHOUT SUFFERING ANY KIND OF
GENDER INEQUALITY.
TO WEAR BOXERS.
TO BE DIFFERENT!
TO SEXUALITY, SPORT,
FREEDOM TO DRESS
WITHOUT PREJUDICE.
TO FREE SPEECH! TO PARTICIPATE.
TO BE TREATED WITH RESPECT.
TO EXPRESS OUR VOICE.
TO WEAR ANY CLOTHES
WE WANT TO WEAR.
TO RACIAL EQUALITY AND TO
AFROBRAZILIAN CULTURE.
TO FREE IDENTITY.
TO LIVE WITHOUT FEAR.
TO GIVE OUR OPINION.
FOR THE RIGHT OVER OUR BODIES.
FOR THE RIGHT TO SAY NO!
Girls United!

Girls United for the respect of the human being. For the fight against "fatphobia". For a more inclusive society that respects the female adolescent and activist. For the appreciation of girls and for gender equity in sport. For equality at work. For the fight against xenophobia. For the enhancement of Afro-Brazilian and indigenous culture diversity. For the equality between boys and girls in the family environment. For a better youth. For the minorities, black, lesbian, and women of the slums.
The speech of Rita dos Santos Silva, 19-year-old, of the indigenous Potiguara, from the Indigenous Youth Network (REJUIND) of Paraíba, in the National Congress. An example of leadership, not only for the indigenous cause but also for all Brazilian girls and women of the world. With her strength and integrity, Rita elicited a plethora of applauses that interrupted the silence caused by her words.

"Good afternoon, honorable members of the Parliament,

As a girl, I fight for the indigenous cause, for my roots and my culture. From yesterday to Wednesday, I am participating in the International Seminar on Girls' Empowerment, in which I encountered 70 active voices that defend different causes, but with the same essence. This shows that my situation is not different from theirs or from thousands of other girls in all Brazilian regions and from other parts of the world.

Issues such as abuse and sexual exploitation, child labor, especially in the domestic and rural areas, school dropouts, pregnancy, and discrimination based on sexual orientation, race, against HIV-infected people and/or people with disabilities were raised by the participants. This is just to show some examples of how gender inequality affects girls and women in this country, in Latin America and the Caribbean.

In view of the girls' reality, we are all together to develop an agenda of demands. We would like to count on your support, sensitivity and participation to listen to our voices. We want to put an end to violence against girls and women. Education for all, regardless of sexual orientation, social class, culture, race and ethnicity. We want support in cases of adolescent pregnancy so that girls do not drop out of school. We want the right to sport to be taken seriously and with equality.

This movement for girls' rights cannot be restricted to females. Men and boys need to engage in it as well, because the whole society benefits from equality. They took my leaves, cut my branches, cut my trunk, but my roots they will never pull out. Today we are seeds, tomorrow we will be roots. Today we are girls, tomorrow we will be women."
“Today we are seeds, tomorrow we will be roots.”

(RITA DOS SANTOS SILVA, 19, of the indigenous Potiguara, from the Indigenous Youth Network – REJUNED, of Paraíba)
"I never imagined that a girl from the countryside, a farmer, could serve consecutive terms in the Parliament. I believe that one of the main routes of transformation is education. Education is the basis of change."

(Rita Camata, ex-congresswoman and rapporteur of the Statute of the Child and Adolescent – ECA)
Strategies for Girls’ Empowerment

The participants developed the agenda for girls’ empowerment with the managers, and indicated strategies to fulfill the agenda. In the area of public policy, the objective is to continue the work on promoting and defending the rights of adolescents, facilitating dialogue opportunities between them and government authorities, as well as expanding policies against discrimination based on gender, sexual orientation and race. The list of actions also includes the dissemination and search for partners to guarantee the rights of girls and women, encouraging the drafting of policies against violence; the establishment of coordinating offices and departments focusing on gender issues; the production of material available on girls’ rights in accessible languages to all; fundraising to implement solutions suggested by the girls; their participation in institutional actions; governmental programs and the establishment of broad programs to empower girls.

Among the commitments made by the managers, there were some highlights: the exchange of experiences between communities; learning about human rights policies and participatory budget; and the design of regional and state projects on girls’ empowerment in conferences and forums. Other goals that were also identified were: to allow the participation of adolescents in public policy debate forums; to create girls’ working groups within networks and forums, and to strengthen the existing ones; to use general communication strategies for girls’ empowerment; to make alliances, and to know the reality experienced by girls.

Gender and race issues were especially highlighted, with goals geared towards specific actions in favor of Afro-women; and towards the implementation of policies against gender discrimination; in addition to a work exchange of the experiences obtained in Salvador. The creation of a manual of inclusive and non-sexist language for schools and libraries was suggested, as well as the formulation of public policies with the issue of children and gender at the center. It was also suggested to increase opportunities for women to participate more in public spaces; to conduct campaigns on the impact of sexual division of labor; to expand opportunities to reflect on the role of women with children and adolescents in various public policies for education, health, culture, sports etc.; and to promote an agenda of gender equality in public policies. Seeing as gender prejudice almost always goes hand in hand with violence, another goal is to work with prosecutors and defense centers on violence, gender violence, empowerment and masculinity. Another proposal is conducting campaigns in the public sphere against "fatphobia" and xenophobia.

Another issue included in the final agenda of the seminar was adolescent pregnancy. On this subject, it was suggested to implement actions that aim to support young mothers so that they continue their studies and are able to have a better professional career and a better quality of family life. There is also a project for research sharing in order to have more indicators to formulate and monitor public policies directed at girls, and thus identify, extend and/or implement health care to girls in all kinds of discrimination and violence situations. The need to create and/or strengthen a network of girls’ empowerment and stimulate prominence and girls’ empowerment in their own communities and/or territories is also present, so that they become women who are capable of building and telling different stories.

In the field of South-South Cooperation, the following actions were suggested: create exchange programs on good practices, including experiences such as Social Protection in Guatemala, the Eve for Life NGO in Jamaica and São Paulo’s House of the Adolescent (“Casa do Adolescente”). Other proposals aim to address the issues of security, violence and
adolescents, to break teachers’ and educators’ resistance, to have methods for monitoring data on public policies for adolescents, and to enable the continuing formation of educators. Other goals are: give a voice to girls, publish their speeches (Eve for Life), and work to change social awareness to protect and promote the incorporation of comprehensive sex education curriculum in schools, and to diagnose gender issues between indigenous communities and agricultural migrants (Mexico).

Regarding the seminar’s organization, the following suggestions for positive changes were identified: the inclusion of boys in the meetings, but keeping exclusive spaces for girls, and the participation of women from minority groups (LGBTI) in order to expand and proceed with the diversity of guests. It was also suggested to renew the participating teams, which can contribute to increase and strengthen the group. Finally, it was suggested to create an electronic magazine so that experiences presented during the event can be disseminated, and actions can be shared via social media.

The event ended by celebrating the commitment of all participants, the empowerment achieved, the new friendships and partnerships, and the great exchange of information and experiences,
which culminated in the drafting of projects and actions to be developed from 2015 onwards. Farewells marked the end only of the physical meeting, as the commitments that were made, the objectives and the learnings will continue on and be multiplied beyond the scope of the meeting. The seminar contributed to set the gender agenda in adolescent networks and public policies, and to promote actions to be monitored by UNICEF, together with decision makers and adolescent networks.
“...my craziness ends when the idea becomes a reality”

(Gilda Paulina Menchú Tzun, 14 years old, from the Maya K’iche’ ethnicity, Guatemala)
In her speech to parliamentarians in the Chamber of Deputies, the 14-year-old Guatemalan Gilda Paulina Menchú Tzun, from the indigenous ethnicity Maya K’ich’e and a member of the Guatemalan Parliament for Children and Adolescence, called for action and practice, rather than more laws, and remembered that no country is isolated and that cooperation is required.

“Good afternoon, honorable Parliamentarians,

Let me start by saying that I represent in this seminar girls who accompany us, who are from Mexico, Ecuador and Jamaica. I stand here representing also other girls and women: all the ones that could not be present; girls suffering from discrimination, girls who are victims of violence, and all of the ones suffering from any kind of problem.

I would like to start with one of the problems that most affect our world: discrimination. All of us have been discriminated against once, in various ways, either based on sexual preference, for having a disability, for our race, culture, language, clothing, and even our country of origin.

Another point I would like to highlight is how even in the 21st century, women are seen as an object and not a subject of law. Still, in Latin America, we have cases of parents and families that due to a lack of economic resources sell and force their daughters into prostitution for monetary reward in exchange. Many times these girls become pregnant at an early age, and often are victims of some sexually transmitted disease such as HIV.

Honorable Parliamentarians, another issue that affects us is bullying. It is one of the factors that has not been resolved and that affects the lives of girls and boys alike. The most vulnerable people are harassed, exposed to physical, verbal and psychological aggressions, consequently resulting in school dropouts and social development problems.

We ask for the support of government authorities to eradicate the various problems that affect our daily lives. We are not asking for more laws, but to put those words into practice.

Brazil is a big country and we are all aware that what is happening here is happening throughout Latin America. No country can be isolated, so we need our governments to strengthen their alliances with each other and share good policies, good practices.

I want to finish my speech, honorable Parliamentarians, expressing that unfortunately we are mostly surrounded by men. Without a doubt, Latin America needs more women in politics, it is our right. I dream that when I return to Brazil as an adult, I can speak again in this House and that we will be better represented.

A final message. They tell me that I am crazy because of the ideas that I have, but I tell you: my craziness ends when the idea becomes a reality.

Thank you very much.”
Actions for 2015

The work has only just begun. Ideas, commitments and projects have been drafted, and it is now time to act. For the young participants of the II International Seminar on Girls’ Empowerment there is no time to lose. Action plans to implement the agenda set out for the event have already started, and show all the capacity that girls have, not to mention their willpower and leadership. Summaries of the action plans designed by members of the various adolescents’ networks who attended the seminar will follow. Other networks are still finalizing their action plan.

Let us begin with the National Council of the Rights of Children and Adolescents (CONANDA). To set the issue of gender equality on the agenda of all meetings, with the involvement of children and adolescents, girls representing the Council want to create discussions, plenaries and/or dynamics guided by an informative material that can be provided by UNICEF, according to their suggestion.

Among the various ideas raised by the girls of the Mercosur Youth Parliament (PJM) is the use of the Youth Statute and other laws about equality, as a way to promote the knowledge of young high school students about the legislation on equality and how it should be put into action. This knowledge will be disseminated through posters, lectures and dynamic activities. Furthermore, it will ensure the inclusion of content about gender inequality in subjects like Sociology and Philosophy, and the study of feminist thinkers in History. Their actions encompass several areas, from citizen participation, human rights, youth and work to actions aiming at girls’ empowerment between members of the Mercosur Youth Parliament network.
The Black Youth National Forum (FONAJUNE) proposes to increase the contact with local movements - of women, indigenous peoples, students, LGBTI, among others - with the purpose of organizing a space for reflection and debate on issues related to education, health, economy, politics, human rights, girls’ and women’s roles in Brazilian society and girls’ rights. The girls will also coordinate the creation of a local council for girls’ empowerment via the Human Rights Secretariat and create a working group on law and girls’ empowerment in FONAJUNE, among many other actions.

The girls of the Network of Adolescents and Youth for the Right to Safe and Inclusive Sport (REJUPE) will address the gender issue through debates in several spaces, including the Integrated Caravan of Sport and Citizenship (CIEC), valuing the woman and her role in society. They will also hold seminars with the participation of women of different age groups that will expose problems faced in women’s paths to achieving positive feelings of self-worth. These will concern issues regarding prejudice, diversity, physical appearance, race, and gender inequality within companies etc, seeking solutions to the issue.

With the proposal to extend spaces for reflection on the role of women in society, the National Network of Adolescent and Young Communicators (RENAJOC) will hold a political formation meeting for girls. To fulfill the objective of empowerment: “Being a girl and living without the fear of giving your opinion”, girls’ groups will be formed to discuss the topic, leading participants to make decisions and face their fears.

The girls representing the Institute of Socioeconomic Studies (INESC) will include girls’ empowerment in the 2015 version of the project that will be held by INESC together with the Networks’ House. More specifically, in order to understand girls’ spaces in their neighborhoods, issues that were discussed during the seminar will be mentioned in a research project on students from public schools and urban violence, including violence regarding police, race, gender, sexual issues, among others.
Profiles of the Participants

Girls that attended the II International Seminar on Girls’ Empowerment are leaders and activists in their communities, integrating the following adolescent groups and networks:

In Brazil:

- National Network of Adolescent and Young Communicators (RENAJOC),
- Network of Adolescents and Youth for the Right to Safe and Inclusive Sport (REJUPE),
- Indigenous Youth Network (REJUIND),
- Rural Education
- National Network of Adolescents and Young People Living with HIV/AIDS (RNAJVHA)
- Youth United for Life in the Amazon (JUVA)
- Black Youth National Forum (FONAJUNE)
- Adolescent Net Project of the Princess Anastácia Women’s Group, of Bahia,
- Nucleus for Adolescent Citizenship (NUCAs) in UNICEF’s Platform in the Brazilian’s Semiarid,
- UNICEF’s Platform for Urban Centres,
- Projects organized by Plan International,
- Projects supported by the International Institute for the Development of Citizenship (IIDAC),
- National Council of the Rights of Children and Adolescents (CONANDA),
- Projects supported by the National Secretariat for Youth (SNJ),
- Mercosur Youth Parliament (PJMI),
- Institute of Social Economic Studies (INESC).

In the invited countries:

The girls are leaders in social projects and activists who participate in programs supported by UNICEF in Mexico, Guatemala, Ecuador and Jamaica; including Mexico’s Foundation of Indigenous Peoples United for a Better Community (FIUCM-AC, Mexico); Guatemalan Parliament for Children and Adolescence (Guatemala); Young Peace (Guatemala); Political Training School for Afro-Ecuadorean Adolescents and Women “My Grandmother Told Me” (Ecuador); and Eve for Life (Jamaica).
Youth and adolescent networks

**CONANDA:** Adolescents participating in the conference of the National Council of the Rights for Children and Adolescents, a permanent collegiate body of deliberative status and equal representation, with government and civil society representatives, as seen in the terms of the Child and Adolescent Statute (ECA).

**Rural Education:** Its challenge is to endorse political education for youth and adolescents of rural areas who are part of struggle and social consciousness contexts.

**FONAJUNE:** The Black Youth National Forum aims to contribute to the empowerment of adolescents and young African descent people and support them in the defense of their demands and fight against racism.

**INESC:** The Institute for Socioeconomic Studies is a non-governmental organization whose mission is to contribute to the improvement of democratic processes, aiming at the achievement of human rights.

**JUVA:** Youth United for Life in the Amazon was born from the need to address the high rate of youth homicide in the Amazon region and propose public policies to address this challenge.

**PCU:** UNICEF’s Platform for Urban Centres, pursues an inclusive development model in large cities, reducing intra-urban inequalities and ensuring greater and better access to rights.

**PJM:** The Mercosur Youth Parliament is a project of the Ministry of Education from the following countries: Argentina, Brazil, Paraguay, Uruguay and Venezuela. The project involves students to contribute in the construction of quality high school standards.

**Plan International:** Programs aiming at enabling and empowering children, young people and their communities to acquire skills and abilities that help them transform their realities.

**Adolescent Net Project of the Princess Anastácia Women’s Group:** Girls participating in the development of projects supported by the Municipal Fund for Human Development and Educational Inclusion of Afro-Descendant Women (FIEMA) of the Municipal Department of Education of Salvador’s City Hall.

**REJUIND:** The Indigenous Youth Network discusses, both regionally and nationally, an inclusive agenda with topics such as cultural factors and the alarming cases of youth suicide.

**REJUPE:** Network of Adolescents and Youth for the Right to Safe and Inclusive Sport was present in all host cities of the 2014 World Cup and São Luís do Maranhão. REJUPE aims to have a political influence for the right to sport.

**RENAJOC:** The National Network of Adolescent and Young Communicators is present in 22 states producing communication tools to express their opinion, mobilize their peers and discuss their rights in all media.

**RNAJVHA:** The National Network of Adolescents and Young People Living with HIV/AIDS acts with social inclusion, participation and promoting bio and psychosocial empowerment of young people and adolescents with positive serology for HIV.

**Semiarid:** The Nucleus for Adolescent Citizenship (NUCAs) are present in the cities enrolled in the UNICEF Municipal Seal of Approval in the semiarid region and act by mobilizing their peers to improve the lives of children and adolescents in the region.

**SNJ:** Girls who are part of social participation and leadership programs supported by the National Secretariat of Youth.
Representatives of the Mercosur Youth Parliament (PJM)

Representatives of the Network of Adolescents and Youth for the Right to Safe and Inclusive Sport (REJUPE)

Representatives of the Rural Education program (MST – Landless Workers Movement)

Representatives of the National Council of the Rights for Children and Adolescents (CONANDA)
"I just loved it and enjoyed every moment. I really have more energy to continue, new ideas, strategies and hopes. I feel different, more secure about my activism and have the feeling that I am on the right track and that now it is time to make it come true!"

Tabita Abe Assunção, 19-year-old, National Youth Secretariat - Popular Legal Advocacy Project, Cuiabá (Mato Grosso).

"The seminar was an opportunity that united both professional and personal joys. It was the reassurance that together, men and women can make the world a better place".

Tássia Alves, 18-year-old, UNICEF Platform for Urban Centres (PCU)/Youth United for Life in the Amazon (JUVA), Belém (Pará).

"The empowerment process that happened in the seminar was very rich. The workshops and group dynamics all contributed for a sum of knowledge between each one of us. I feel grateful and happy for this opportunity."

Erica da Silva Oliveira, 16-year-old, Black Youth National Forum (FONAJUNE), Manaus (Amazonas).
“At the Girls’ Empowerment Seminar I learnt that we can all communicate, regardless of the language we speak. That the causes may be different, but the warriors fight the same battle. I also learned that we have different cultures, but women’s values are the same.”

Jiovanna Maria Oliveira Tito, 18-year-old, Nucleus for Adolescent Citizenship (NUCA) in the UNICEF Platform in the Brazilian Semiarid, Teresina (Piauí).

“It was wonderful to see all this diversity in such a small space and yet so big. We have created a feeling that the world needs: solidarity and kindness towards others.”


“Wonderful and decisive because we now have more objectives to pursue in our society.”

Suyanne Maroyse da Cruz, Nucleus for Adolescent Citizenship (NUCA) in the UNICEF Platform in the Brazilian Semiarid, Parelhas (Rio Grande do Norte).

“The seminar will always be remembered in my life because it was a way to recognize ourselves, to get to know each other personally and professionally. It was an opportunity to make the world a better place and achieve our objectives as girls and women in society.”

Gessiele Azevedo de Souza, 17-year-old, Adolescent Net Project of the Princess Anastácia Women’s Group, Salvador (Bahia).