



UNICEF Initiatives in fulfillment of the Brasilia Consensus in Latin America and the Caribbean

INTRODUCTION

This report presents information on the initiatives undertaken by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in Latin America and the Caribbean in support of the fulfillment of the Brasilia Consensus and is being submitted to the Executive Board of the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) for the 12th session of the Regional Conference on Women in Latin America and the Caribbean.

In 2012 and 2013, UNICEF in Latin America and the Caribbean continued to be part of the United Nations Secretary-General's UNiTE to End Violence against Women campaign at regional and national levels, focusing on education for gender-based violence prevention. UNICEF has also continued to develop tools aimed at guiding country offices to work on the links between gender, human rights, and inter-culturality. One example is "Expanding the View: The Integration of the Gender, Interculturality and Human Rights Approaches in Development Programming," a tool developed jointly by UNICEF, UNDP, UNFPA and UN Women that aims to assist United Nations country offices in Latin America and the Caribbean integrate the three approaches that represent the essential United Nations values of a human rights-based approach, gender equality, and respect towards different cultures.

UNICEF activities in Latin America and the Caribbean in support of the fulfillment of the Brasilia Consensus are presented below.

1. Empowerment of girls

In **El Salvador**, two projects related to emergency preparedness and response and the right to education and risk management and adaptation to climate change are in development with financial support from the United Kingdom and Luxembourg. These projects work specifically with groups of girls, adolescent girls and women to strengthen their awareness of gender and the vulnerability of girls and women in emergency situations, as well as in the area of community organization and participation post-disaster. To date, more than one thousand girls and adolescent girls have been empowered through this training.

In **Guatemala**, a model of Communication for Development is being implemented in the area of nutrition in response to a bottleneck analysis. This strategy focuses on women's empowerment at the local level, especially adolescent mothers who are part of the *Comisiones Comunitarias de Seguridad Alimentaria y Nutricional* (COCOSAN, Food Safety and Nutrition Community Commissions). Through COCOSAN, they receive tools and participatory communication skills, and have opportunities for dialogue and exchange. Also, through this strategy, a youth communicators' network has been created that gives school children the necessary skills to develop their own television programme.

2. Participation of girls and adolescent girls in decision-making processes

In **Colombia**, the active participation of girls and young women is being promoted in capacity-building processes, life skills workshops and the promotion of rights with a gender focus. One initiative is *Golombiao – The Peace Game*, which promotes non-violence, participation and gender equality through a soccer game in which both boys and girls participate. This strategy has been very important in the process of recognizing girls as rights holders in their families, schools and communities.

In **Guatemala**, UNICEF supports *Abriendo Oportunidades*, an initiative developed by the Population Council that promotes safe spaces for adolescent girls' participation, in collaboration with municipalities in rural areas. In addition, UNICEF supports the *Parlamento Guatemalteco para la Niñez y Adolescencia* (Parliament of Guatemala for Children and Adolescents), which is also a space for political participation and interaction with government authorities.

In **Nicaragua**, UNICEF contributes to strengthening the capacity of adolescents to organize and participate in their own spaces. One example is *Escuelas Amigas y Saludables* and the *Red de adolescentes comunicadores* ("Friendly and Healthy Schools" and the "Adolescent Communicators Network"), through which adolescents participate in planning and decision-making processes and make their collective voice and approaches heard in different social and political forums and spaces.

3. Violence against girls and adolescent girls

In **Bolivia**, UNICEF supported the publication of the first annual report on violence against girls and boys, which included data generated by the *Sistema de Monitoreo de Información sobre Protección de Derechos de Niñez* (SID, Monitoring System of Information on the Protection of the Rights of Children), which indicates that 52 per cent of cases of violence are related to girls.

In **Colombia**, UNICEF provided technical assistance to the *Comisión intersectorial para la prevención del reclutamiento, la utilización y la violencia sexual contra niños, niñas, y adolescentes por grupos organizados al margen de la ley y grupos delictivos organizados*, to address gender-based sexual violence against children in armed conflict. In addition, UNICEF has supported strategies to prevent violence against children and has strengthened protection mechanisms and prosecution in cases related to violence. UNICEF has reinforced the capacities of staff in the justice, protection and tourism sectors. Training has consisted in teaching about the implementation of national laws 1329 and 1336 on sexual exploitation, and of promoting a more appropriate form of prevention, attention to and prosecution of violence against children, both on the national and local levels. In trainings provided to the Armed Forces, the National Police on Children's Rights and International Humanitarian Law, one of the main topics is the identification and prevention of sexual and gender-based violence.

In the **Dominican Republic**, UNICEF provided technical assistance to the National Congress in support for the inclusion of child sexual exploitation and violence against women and girls as crimes in the Penal Code. Together with the Ministry of Tourism and the Hotels and Tourism Association of the Dominican Republic, UNICEF is supporting the development of a strategy to prevent the sexual exploitation of children in the tourism industry. In addition, UNICEF provides support to the National Council for Children and

Adolescence in implementing the recommendations from the UN Study on Violence Against Children.

In the **Eastern Caribbean**, UNICEF has supported national Child Protection Departments in several countries on sensitization and awareness strategies to prevent gender-based violence and general violence against children. It has promoted the adoption of the *Break the Silence – End Child Sexual Abuse* campaign and has supported the launch of these campaigns in several countries, which has raised awareness of what constitutes abuse. In addition, using various forums, UNICEF has advocated for the issue of sexual violence of children to be included in national and regional agendas. As a result, the Council for the Human and Social Development on Children and Youth of the Caribbean Community, also known as CARICOM, has adopted a Declaration stating that child sexual abuse needs to be addressed urgently. It has also resulted in the adoption of the Bridgetown Declaration by Ministers responsible for Child Protection in November 2012, where they committed to implement actions to end child sexual abuse and to strengthen systems to prevent and protect children, including girls, from sexual abuse.

In **El Salvador**, the *Protocolo de actuación para el abordaje de la violencia sexual en las comunidades educativas de El Salvador* was signed in 2013. Its purpose is to serve as a practical and useful tool for all in the education sector, when addressing sexual harassment, sexual assault and rape cases, three of the most common manifestations of sexual violence. The Protocol intends to guide the educational community towards “zero tolerance” of sexual violence crimes, which may become one of the main barriers to the enjoyment of children’s and adolescents’ right to education in El Salvador. In addition, an initiative was supported in 2012, with the objective of eradicating sexual and gender-based violence in 40 public schools in the municipalities of Santa Tecla, San Marcos and Mejicanos. It includes specialized training to strengthen teachers’ skills in gender-based violence prevention, with an emphasis on preventing and monitoring sexual violence and strengthening detection, referral and counter-referral methods for cases identified in the educational community. The project also incorporates an empowerment strategy for children, adolescents and young people.

In **Guatemala**, UNICEF is working to strengthen the Public Ministry, the Supreme Court, the Attorney General’s Office, and the specialized juvenile justice system on sexual violence and human trafficking. UNICEF also supports governmental efforts to improve capacities related to prevention, referral and case management to address the protection of girls.

In **Haiti**, UNICEF has given priority to support national efforts to address violence against children following a nationwide Violence Against Children Survey (VACS) by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. The survey describes the magnitude and nature of the problem, assesses public health consequences, evaluates the use of services, identifies potential risks and protective factors, and guides the development of prevention programmes and policies. Survey outcomes highlight a high level of violence, including sexual violence, experienced by both girls and boys. Findings also show that a large majority of children have experienced physical violence, perpetrated mostly by household members. UNICEF, together with all members of the inter-institutional working group on VACS, is supporting national efforts to develop a National Plan of Action to prevent and respond to this type of violence.

In **Mexico**, as part of a UN Joint Programme to Prevent Gender-Based Violence in Indigenous Communities, UNICEF is reinforcing the capacity of local actors to develop and implement inter-institutional protocols against gender-based and other forms of violence against children and adolescents in ten municipalities with large indigenous populations in

the States of Chiapas and Oaxaca. Dialogue has been promoted between formal judicial authorities and traditional indigenous authorities on gender-based violence. The programme enables both survivors and duty bearers from indigenous groups to report cases of violence, gender-based violence and sexual exploitation. The programme also builds the capacities of duty bearers from the community to promote personalized and comprehensive responses including legal redress, psycho-social support, and the protection of other rights such as continued access to education. Intercultural dialogue promoted through the initiative has allowed protective traditional customs and significant events in the community to be incorporated into protection measures. The initiative has been systematized, and a cost-benefit analysis is being undertaken as part of a replication plan for the entire State of Oaxaca.

4. Access to new technologies and promotion of democratic mechanisms of communication

In **Guatemala**, UNICEF collaborates with two key partners, *Paz Joven* and the *Parlamento Guatemalteco para la Niñez y Adolescencia*, on adolescent development by disseminating information on sexual and reproductive health. An example can be seen at: <http://pazjovenyodecido.org/yodecido>

In **Jamaica**, UNICEF has partnered with Eve for Life, a non-governmental organization that works with young mothers infected or affected by HIV and AIDS, to provide them with an online avenue for their voices to be heard and their stories to be shared. Called the "SHEroes" initiative, the girls created visual stories of the challenges they face, which were shared widely via social media platforms. In addition, UNICEF is providing technical support for a multi-agency effort to establish a virtual space for adolescents to get information, counseling and referral services for reproductive and sexual health issues by using new technologies. The participatory space will include gender-sensitive and gender-specific approaches.

5. Promotion of sexual and reproductive health of the adolescent girl

In **Argentina**, UNICEF has supported the implementation of the National Plan for the Reduction of Maternal and Child Mortality, which resulted in an increase of national initiatives and strategies to improve the quality and effectiveness of hospital care in maternity wards. Efforts are being made to promote the implementation of the National Plan in every public maternity hospital or ward where more than 1,000 births are delivered annually. Other areas of support include the improvement of medical care effectiveness safety, and attention to women seeking ante natal, maternal and birth delivery services, following human rights standards.

In the **Dominican Republic**, UNICEF is supporting the Office of the Vice President, the Office of the First Lady, and the Ministries of Health and Education in developing and implementing the *Programa Afectivo Sexual* for teachers, families, peers, and children to strengthen the delivery of sexual and reproductive health education for adolescents, and the *Programa Nacional de Salud Integral del Adolescente* (National Comprehensive Health Plan for the Adolescent), focused on preventing pregnancy and transmission of sexually transmitted infections and HIV amongst adolescents. UNICEF is also providing technical assistance to the Office of the Vice-First Lady in support of the *Plan Nacional de Reducción del Embarazo en Adolescentes* (National Plan for Adolescent Pregnancy Reduction).

In **Jamaica**, UNICEF supports the Mentor Moms Programme, a collaboration between the Ministry of Health and the NGO Eve for Life that offers pregnant adolescent girls access to sexual and reproductive health information and referral services. Adolescent mothers, most of who are living with HIV, have been trained with knowledge and skills to mentor other teenaged mothers on antenatal and postnatal care, including care of their newborn. They also deliver basic counseling and information on the prevention of unplanned pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections.

6. Activities in favour of the rural girl in those areas

In **Bolivia**, UNICEF, together with UN Women and UNFPA, participated in a hearing with members of the Parliamentary Network for Children and Adolescents to express concern over news of the expulsion of pregnant girls who live in rural areas from their communities. Joint assistance will be provided for the development of informational materials on prevention and the rights of adolescent girls. The Members of Parliament have pledged to advocate in favour of the right to education of this group of girls. In addition, research was conducted on menstrual hygiene management and habits of schoolgirls in the rural areas of Independencia and Tacopaya in Cochabamba.

In **Colombia**, UNICEF has supported efforts in the Amazon area to empower women and children belonging to indigenous organizations.

In **Panama**, UNICEF helped to build consensus on the need for the harmonization of the age of marriage for both boys and girls to be in compliance with international human rights standards. A draft Law is scheduled to be adopted as Law by the end of 2013. This new law will benefit rural indigenous girls more than other groups of girls in the country.

In **Peru**, UNICEF supported the adoption of a strategy for the empowerment and participation of indigenous girls in bilingual intercultural education with the *Escuelas Amigables* ("Friendly Schools") framework. This strategy emphasizes the development of educational resources for the promotion, respect and inclusion of "traditional female knowledge" in schools. It also promotes the participation and empowerment of girls in the learning process and in school and classroom management. The strategy includes monitoring activities through gender indicators for the school and classroom. In addition, UNICEF has supported the *Dirección General de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe y Rural* of the Ministry of Education to promote meaningful participation of indigenous girls in education policy decision-making.