

External evaluation

## **Project: Municipalization of Children's Rights**

Final report

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## I. Introduction

Plan International is a humanitarian assistance organization dedicated to achieve improvements in childhood welfare in more than 40 developing countries. In 1994, Plan International founded its offices in Nicaragua and has been carrying out since then programs on the national level as well as on local levels. Since 1994 PLAN has been improving the lives of children and families in rural and semi-urban areas of 24 town councils and 255 communities of the departments of Chinandega, Managua, Masaya, Carazo, Madriz and Chontales.

In 2005, the implementation of the project *Municipalization of Children's Rights* began. Its target groups included 3 to 5 authority members of each of the 24 town councils; about 120 members of local childhood and adolescence committees trained in local planning focused on children's rights; an average of 10 community leaders of each of the 255 communities trained and supported by PLAN to organize legally registered community groups and 3500 adults and 5000 children and adolescents trained and supported by Plan to incorporate their perspectives and agendas in the local planning.

The general objective of the is to improve the application of children's and adolescents' rights in the target municipalities.

The specific objective is to integrate children's and adolescents' rights in the system of the local planning in the target municipalities.

Its strategy defines a concentration of resources and efforts in the target communities to achieve four fundamental results:

1. Local Development Plans that contain Children's and Adolescents' Rights.
2. Municipal Childhood and Adolescence Commissions (CMNA - Comisiones Municipales de la Niñez y la Adolescencia), Local Development Committees and Local Risk Management Committees that are able to promote and defend children's and adolescents' rights.
3. Children, adolescents and women participating actively to be finally able to integrate their rights in the local development plans and participate in their application.
4. Local Risk Management being an important factor to build a basis for the rights and the use of community functions to contribute to a sustainable community development based on children and adolescents.

At the end of the project in the year 2007 the management of PLAN hired professional services to develop an external evaluation to determine the level of completion of the goals. In this report the results of the evaluation will be highlighted with special emphasis on the accomplishment of the objectives. The framework will be focused on the rights and the local development will be described as well as the applied methodology with a qualitative focus and an active participation of the community members.

Finally this evaluation includes a chapter with conclusions and recommendations that allow others to have another look on the definition of the actions that should be implemented by PLAN concerning the sustainability of the project .

## II. Objectives of the evaluation

According to the terms of reference presented by Plan International in Nicaragua the objectives of the evaluations are:

### General

Evaluate the fulfillment of the achieved objectives and results of the project *Municipalization of Children's Rights* implemented between January 2005 and December 2007, its influence on the local programs in aid of the childhood and the impact on children and adolescents in the communities where the project was implemented.

### Specific

- a.) Analyze the quantitative and qualitative results obtained from the participation of the children and adolescents in the planning and the carrying out of the actions that guarantee their rights including the Local Risk Management as a part of the local planning.
- b.) Analyze the Local Development Plans and rate their willingness to include and carry out projects with a focus on children's and adolescents' rights, Gender topics and Local Risk Management.
- c.) Analyze the influence and articulation on children's and adolescents' rights of the local organizations that participate in the project (CMNA, COLOPRED, COMUPRED) and the local planning.
- d.) Analyze the level of articulation on children's and adolescents' rights that Plan implements together with other development organizations to support the effort to municipalize these rights.
- e.) Analyze the lessons learned to organize the implemented measures concerning the social influence and mobilization to finally disseminate the best strategies and set up recommendations for future activities.

### **III. Context of the project**

The project began in a favorable context emphasizing the existence of a legal framework based on the Childhood and Adolescence Law, the Civil Participation Law, the Board for the Attention and Protection of the Childhood and Adolescence (CONAPINA ó Consejo Nacional de Atención y Protección a la Niñez y Adolescencia) and the National Plan 2002-2011 for the fulfillment of Childhood Rights.

Furthermore, the Local Planning Strategy focused on Children's Rights (CONAPINA 2001), the vision of PLAN basing the local development on the childhood and the formation of an inter-institutional team integrated by PLAN, CONAPINA and INIFOM. In addition, a coordination between national and international organizations was created to apply children's rights, known as the Alliance for Childhood Investment.

The majority of the local governments were in an initial phase of their implementation on the local and community level. In some communities the CMNA were represented and a Network of Mayors in aid of Children and Adolescents is operating supported by the Nicaraguan Institute of Municipal Sponsorship (INIFOM ó Instituto Nicaragüense de Fomento Municipal) is.

In the communities no instruments were available to analyze the situation of children and adolescents and in the majority of the budgets of the Town Councils the funds designated to the demands of children's rights were inadequate. The plans and activities implemented by the CMNA were not integrated into the local development plans. On the community level the participation of children and adolescents was basically symbolic and their opinions were not considered in the local plans and activities.

Relevant aspects in this context during the execution of the project were: the definition of the strategy of Local Risk Management focused on children's rights and its inclusion as an important component of the project; decentralization projects and policy implemented by the national government; the coincidence of the project with a period of local government and the changes of the authorities of the national government (2007).

In addition, the transformation of the Network of Mayors in Aid of Children and Adolescents into the Association Network of Municipal Governments in Aid of Children and Adolescents (2007) constituted by 62 local governments and its independence of INIFOM, an important national movement to promote the active and conscious participation of children and adolescents in topics that concern them supported by national and international organizations. Furthermore, it is important to point out the reduction of the activity of CONAPINA in 2006 until its closure in 2007 and the termination of the activities of the inter-institutional team composed by Plan, INIFOM and CONAPINA who were the principal promoters on the national level of the Local Planning Strategy focused on children's rights.

On the other hand the CMNA have been strengthened. A National Coordination Commission was created and the National Movement of Local Childhood and Adolescence Committees was founded. Some of the local committees PLAN is working with are members of the National Coordination Commission.

Finally, the development, the coordination and the alliance of national and international organizations implementing children's rights have promoted various activities to municipalize the

rights standing out the allied efforts of UNICEF, PLAN, Save the Children, CODENI and the Commissioner of Childhood Rights known as the Alliance for Childhood Investment.

#### **IV. Conceptual reference framework**

Plan Nicaragua works with a focus on local development based on children's rights emphasizing the importance of the *Superior Interest of Children and Adolescents in the Local Development Agendas*.

This evaluation was developed with the following reference framework and conceptual definitions:

The *Local and Community Development* is the main duty of the community participation. The goal is to form a citizen who participates in transformation processes of his own local reality and create an open atmosphere where citizens make use of their human and material abilities, establish equal social relationships, share their interests, aspirations and necessities and take decisions that improve their quality of life in harmony with nature.

A *Right* is a power, a faculty and a sovereignty that a person has to act in a certain way or sense or to demand a certain behaviour of another person.

The *human rights of children and adolescents* are a reality and demanded to fulfil. Their philosophy and principles can only be applied when they form a part of the daily life of adults, children and adolescents.

Working in this field needs a vision, an attitude and an individual, collective and institutional practice to be incorporated in a decisive manner in the labor of organizations and institutions. This requires a space for reflection and integrated actions where training is the center.

The children's participation is secured through a methodology that offers them opportunities to achieve knowledge, take part in and influence decisions that transform their reality (diagnosis, planning, implementation of plans and evaluation) and work with a focus on children's rights in the employment of these plans.

The aim is to ensure that all children have access to their rights offering them opportunities in the programs and and that nobody is excluded from these rights (no discrimination). This requires to identify where the rights of children are and demand responsibility in their fulfillment (responsibility and demand).

## V. Methodology

In the phases of the evaluation a participative methodology was applied based on self-learning and participation of the principal actors of the project. The methodology using a qualitative focus considered the Human Rights of Children and Adolescents, Gender and Local Risk Management sought the best methods to strengthen the abilities of the target groups emphasizing contents and results. The applied techniques in the evaluation were semi-structured interviews with the target groups as the principal sources to obtain information, understanding of their attitudes, beliefs, cultural knowledge and perceptions. The children and adolescents constituted the target groups.

The groups were mixed and composed by children and adolescents and by adults. Groups only with children were not created considering it an inadequate risk detecting in our first interviews the weaknesses in the gender topic. In the interview with Johana Chévez and Vivian Sequeira the following was expressed: *“there have been good intentions but let’s be clear. There were good intentions but the program -as Vivian had already expressed- is very big and only with the children’s rights topic it is huge and then you include the gender topic when you have to deal with local authorities that are not sensitized not in gender and not in childhood because they are sexist”... according to Johana Chévez...<sup>1</sup> “You have to establish the bases first. We were working more for the children’s rights but the idea is to strengthen parts of the gender topics too because this is really missing.”*

With adults, local authorities and community leaders semi-structured interviews were conducted in open sessions with participants from different communities.

The evaluation carried out from February 12<sup>th</sup> to April 30<sup>th</sup> was developed in four phases:

### A. Preparation of the conditions and approximation of the evaluation team

The following activities were implemented:

a.)

Lecture of the provided documentation: project document

b.)

Interview with Johana Chévez, Beatriz Ruíz and Vivian Sequeira - national technical advisers for the Community Development, Local Risk Management and Childhood Protection ó to analyze the evolution of the project.

c.)

Definition of categories, variables, indicators and designs of the data base for the employment. (Appendix 1: Categories, Variables and Indicators of the analysis).

d.)

Development of the instruments and guidelines for the working sessions:

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<sup>1</sup>Interview realized as National Technical Adviser of Community Development on February 8<sup>th</sup>, 2008.

- Manual of recommendations for the directors of the Program Units (UP- Unidades de Programa) to explain the steps for the working sessions with the target groups and assure that all participants are informed about the sessions
- Interviews guidelines for the Program Units
- Interviews guidelines for local childhood and adolescence commissions
- Interviews guidelines for CDM and COMUPRED
- Working manual for the sessions with community leaders and COLOPRED
- Working manual for the target groups with children and adolescents
- Interview guidelines for key informants

e.)

Interviews with key informants. (Appendix 2).

## **B. Preparation of the conditions, programming and coordination for the field work.**

Program manuals and guidelines for the UP were developed specifying the time frame, actors and the distribution of the evaluating team. They were used as points of reference for the UP that adjusted them to their reality. Every UP selected the municipalities and communities to visit. 17 of 19 municipalities were visited (89,5%). (See Appendix 3: Visited municipalities and communities).

## **C. Collection, processing and analysis of the information**

- Before the field work started the UP established coordination via telephone and e-mail.
- Every UP stayed on average two days in the communities. In very remote ones and in areas with a high number of communities the UP stayed 3 to 4 days. Problems were presented in the UP of Chinandega and Chontales due to the little attendance of the participants.

### **Employed activities in the Program Units (UN-Unidades de Programas) and the municipalities**

- Interview with the person in charge of the project. In the UP of Masatepe and Somoto the directors participated
- Working session with the CMNA
- Working session with the CMD and/or COMUPRED (where they existed)
- Interviews or working sessions with local authorities (mayors, city council members and people in charge of the local planning)
- Working sessions with community leaders (Local Committee, COLOPRED).
- Target groups with children and adolescents
- The collected information in every working session was filed according to their categories of analysis: working group, age group (adult, adolescent, child), municipalities and a syntheses that considered generational and territorial criteria. The program Nudisk was used, designed to process qualitative information of texts. The analysis units were the municipalities and in each of them samples with target groups of the project were performed.

**D. Workshop on the Feedback of the first blueprint of the evaluation** conducted on April 25<sup>th</sup>, 2007 with 19 participants of the UP and the central office of Plan. (Appendix 4: Workshop)

## **E. The Sample**

The evaluating team visited 17 municipalities equal to 71% of the 24 where the project was executed. Every UP selected the municipalities to visit. (See Appendix 5). According to the

expected achievements of the evaluation, the sample did not define the community as a unit of analysis.

In total **51** working sessions were realized (2 sessions with UP, 16 sessions with children and adolescents, 14 sessions with community leaders-COLOPRED, 10 sessions with CMNA, 5 sessions with COMUPRED).

16 focal groups were composed with a total of 175 children and adolescents participating. 103 (59%) of them were female. The largest attendance was achieved in the UP of Chontales followed by the District V of Managua, Villa El Carmen and San Rafael del Sur. (See Appendix 6). 12 (75%) of the target groups represent the semi-rural and 4 (25%) the urban area.

Furthermore, 14 working sessions were conducted with the participation of 144 community leaders. 88 (77%) of them were women. (See Appendix 7: Community leaders). There were also 10 sessions with the CMNA realized with a total participation of 71 members. (See Appendix 8: Working sessions with the CMNA).

## VI. Results of the evaluation according to its objectives

### 1. Participation of children and adolescents in the planning and execution of the activities that guarantee their rights including Local Risk Management as a part of the system of Municipal and Community Planning.

- Plan has developed attempts to contribute to the creation of abilities in children and adolescents and open spaces for their participation.
- In the communities and municipalities the children and adolescents have different levels of development and different expressions of participation among them, such as: Infant Circles, local children and adolescent networks, children and adolescent instructor networks, student governments, assemblies, local juvenile associations, monitoring networks, local rescue brigades, school brigades in case of Local Risk Management.
- Networks and organized actions on an inter-territorial, municipal and district level have been created with adolescent and juvenile leadership to promote and demand children's and adolescents' rights. For instance, Local Juvenile Association (District V-Managua) and Juvenil Association for Education (JUNPRODE) from Masatepe that intend to be associations in their respective departments. According to the level of development these networks have achieved representation in the CMNA.
- The local networks respond to the Ninos, Ninas y Adolescentes (NNA) of all the municipalities with representatives of the communities and the student governments, develop plans together, train themselves and develop multiplying processes in the community and the school. In the municipalities of San Rafael, Villa El Carmen and Juigalpa representatives of the communities and schools participated. The agendas of the networks include principal organization activities, training meetings, sport leagues and trips with the children.

**In Villa EL Carmen the following was expressed:** "We built a network for the rights of Villa El Carmen where we received a training about our rights and how to defend them and then we provided this knowledge to our communities. We are 70 in the network and we are also in the Infant Circles, where handicrafts are made and dances organized and where all kinds of questions concerning the rights are answered. In these networks we have a space to participate freely."

**The network from Santo Tomás Chontales:** "It's integrated by 12 neighborhoods and/or communities and student governments. In every neighborhood we have a board of 6 children and adolescents, in total we are about 72 kids. In every community 2 kids were selected and they are going to participate in a training on local government in Juigalpa. They will also be trained in laws: Civil Participation, municipal laws and how to organize the assembly."<sup>2</sup>

- The local governments integrated in the Association Network of Mayors in Aid of Children and Adolescents are supposed to conduct assemblies at least once a year. The field team of PLAN makes the effort to assure that they are carried out however there are no records of the accomplishment of the demands of children and adolescents. In San Rafael del Sur an

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<sup>2</sup>Target Group with children and adolescents (NNA - ninos, ninas y adolescentes) from Santo Tomás, March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2008

initiative of the Young People's Club has been found that makes the effort to keep a records of the activities.

- In the filed visits it could be confirmed that assemblies were conducted in San Rafael del Sur, Chinandega, Villanueva, El Viejo, Somoto, San Lucas, Palacagüina, Juigalpa, Santo Tomás, Villa Sandino, Cuapa, El Rosario and Niquinohomo. This process has been supported by Plan with a methodology developed by the CMNA Chinandega and shared via exchanges with the other municipalities.

Regarding the proposed demands of the NNA (reparation of parks, streets, roads, schools, courts, bridges, water, libraries, security in the parks, cultural institutions, uniforms, balls) there is little information about their responses due to the absence of a monitoring system. Among the demands widely met is the support of the sports activities (uniformes and balls). In the municipality of Somoto two parks, a library and sport courts were built and renovated; in Santo Tomás and Juigalpa: a cultural institution and the repair of the Institute in the community La Greca, municipality of Villanueva.

“I Have participated in two assemblies but the last time I pointed out the difficulties of the little school of the Association of Deaf People. For instance, there we have been waiting for response almost two years. This year the mayor finally showed up with an engineer and other workers asking us what kind of damages we had in the school and I explained the numerous necessities.”<sup>3</sup>

- In the processes of identifying the problems of a community the communication with the NNA could be improved. They know the situation first hand from their own homes and the reflections they realize in the Infant Circles. The most sensitive problems encountered are violence as well as sexual abuse and drug addiction. This situation is most strongly perceived in Managua District V and Chinandega. Although violence is the most sensitive problem the NNA claim that they don't know of actions to reduce it.

In general, all interviewed children and adolescents claim that they do not know the community plans and add that that they are not taken into account for their implementation. Their contact with the community leaders is only occasionally during the activities developed in the communities. “They think we only want to play.”<sup>4</sup> A different situation was observed in the municipalities of Santo Tomás and Villanueva where the children and adolescents were highly linked with the community organizations.

- The children and adolescents evaluated very positively being organized thus it guarantees their representation in the different institutions. A clear vision of the future and an awareness of the improvement of their situation. The participation has permitted them to develop personally, get a vision of their rights and broaden their vision from an individual to a more general point of view through the participation in the networks.

### **The NNA express the observed changes:**

- “Knowing how to express myself helps me to possess more arguments and knowledge. Helping my community is a satisfaction for me.”<sup>5</sup>
- “It has permitted me to know other groups and someone learns how to detect the necessities of the community, has a goal and a broader projection for the future.”<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>Target group with NNA from the municipality of San Rafael del Sur, February 27<sup>th</sup>, 2008

<sup>4</sup>Target group with NNA from the municipality of Santo Tomás, March 4<sup>th</sup>, 2008

<sup>5</sup>Target group with NNA, El Portillo, Niquinohomo, March 26<sup>th</sup>, 2008

- "Proud to represent the other children and adolescents and demand our rights; more opportunities of participation; I feel valuable and important".<sup>7</sup>

In general, the interviewed children and adolescents know their rights, they have studied them and in the majority share that information with others. They are able to express what they learn about the rights like inscription in the registration office, education and recreation.

Asking them how they promote their rights, they answered: Recreational activities where they share with other children what they know, promote the rights in the community, promote the participation of the children and adolescents in the assemblies, in the election of student governments, participating in Infant Circles, Guitar playing, painting, sports, handicrafts; supporting other people in cases of abuse, assign the resources to the improvement of the schools, creating murals, promoting activities for the anniversaries and promoting Clubs, Assemblies and Local Networks. In the queries no specific efforts to promote the participation of handicapped children and adolescents could be identified.

## **2. Inclusion and execution of the projects with a focus on children's and adolescents' rights, Gender and Local Risk Management in the Municipal and Community Plans.**

- The Committees of Municipal Development (CDM) ó easily confused with Municipal Children and Adolescence Commissions and the Municipal Disaster Prevention Committees ó do not exist or do not work properly in all the municipalities. Some CDM were created before the Citizen Participation Law was approved and after that they were not recognized by the mayors. In Niquinohomo the Committee of Municipal Development (CDM) sued the municipal government.
- The institutional strengthening to incorporate the focus on childhood rights in the municipalities is expressed in different initiatives: creation of a working area for children and adolescents, assignment of a city council member, a technician or a promoter to offer them special attention to their demands and in some cases even the creation of an Office for Childhood Attention. In the majority of the city councils, designating up to 1% of the budget to support the fulfillment of the childhood rights could be achieved. In other municipalities this percentage could even be surpassed. (See Appendix 9: Budget Assignment).
- In the investment plans of the municipalities Plan International is working with ,we found significant activities implemented to assure the enforcement of childhood rights, principally in infrastructure. Projects to repair and construct schools, preschools, parks, recreational centers, sport courts and municipal libraries were executed.
- In the communities the planning does not correspond to a system that integrates it into the Local Development Plan but to the planning of the donating organisation. Among the community leaders and the children and adolescents insufficient knowledge about the system of municipal planning was found.
- Concerning the gender equality and its integration into the processes of the project the unanimous conclusion in the queries in the UP was, that it was not considered as an important factor in the plans and programs. There was no reference concerning the conditions of men and women or the inequality of genders found in the planning process.

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<sup>6</sup>Target group with Nna, San José of Masatepe, March 25<sup>th</sup>, 2008

<sup>7</sup>Target group with NNA, Villanueva, March 11<sup>th</sup>, 2008

The Women and Childhood Commissioners as members of the CMNA emphasized the necessity to work with a focus on the gender topic.

- In the communities women are integrated as Plan Volunteers but their participation does not necessarily have a gender reference. We found a stronger implementation of this topic among groups of young people especially in three visits in El Portillo (Niquinohomo) and Villa Carmen (La Trinidad). In the communities of La Trinidad, Somoto and San Lucas a special mention of the training on gender topics was made by the Civil Defense together with Plan.
- In the trainings on (sexual) health with the groups of young people we could identify more focus on gender topics as well as in the work of some women who form organisations like Group Myriam (Chinandega), Layers Boris Vega (San Marcos, Masatepe, Niquinohomo) and the OEA in the instruction process of jurisprudential advisers.
- In the plans of the GLR the children and adolescents participated principally in simulation activities, local brigades and school brigades. Their participation in the development of the local development plan is still limited. We found that although the Civil Defense claims a focus on childhood rights, it does not possess a proper methodology nor appropriate materials to integrate them into their Local Risk Management Plans.
- The local leaders consider that the efforts made by the Local Plans of the GLR is very important but they point out that it has to be assured that they are known in the communities and keep them updated. "We created maps of the community and pinpointed the problems but Plan took it away and now I don't know if they still exist".<sup>8</sup>
- The municipal governments do not have sufficient resources to keep the systems of Disaster Prevention on the municipal and community level.
- The plans of the GLR and the project support themselves mutually. "The GLR contributes the integral focus and receives a space to incorporate a vision of the municipal development."<sup>9</sup>

### **3. Incidence and rating of childhood and adolescence rights in the local organizations participating in the municipal and community planning of the project (CMNA, COMUPRED and COLOPRED).**

- In the enforcement, promotion and defense of the childhood and adolescence rights, the CMNA have progressed to the point of coordinating mechanisms and inter-institutional units. In the municipalities they are the most important actors in the promotion and defense of childhood and adolescence rights. They are recognized as the entity of coordination in all children topics. The CMNA have developed rating mechanisms of incidences and some of them are considered as "worktables" by their respective municipal governments.
- In all the visited municipalities we found coordination and promotion plans of childhood and adolescence rights, with the municipalities of San Lucas, Palacagüina and Somoto standing out because the community development plans are integrated into actions for the childhood.
- The CMNA have different levels of integration and participation. In general, they are integrated by the Ministry of Health (MINSAs), the Ministry of Education (MINED), the

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<sup>8</sup>Community leader from Buenos Aires, San Rafael del Sur

<sup>9</sup>Beatriz Ruiz, National Adviser of Plan for the Local Risk Management

Ministry of Family (in municipalities where they are represented) and City Councils (Social promoters or city council members). In the municipalities of El Rosario and Niquinohomo the local judges have been integrated into the CMNA. There are CMNA that have the support of national and international NGOs and some businesses. In San Rafael del Sur (CEDRU, CEMEX, NICALIT); in Villa Sandino (Los Pipitos); in El Viejo (CISAS, Maíz, Xochitquetzal; GBS); in San Lucas (INPRHU); in Somoto (SOS Villages, CONAS). The CMNA of Chinandega and Somoto work with local radios. Chinandega, El Rosario, Palacagüina and Somoto integrate community leaders and organizations.

- Members of the CMNA of Chinandega, Somoto, San Marcos Juigalpa and the former CMNA of the District V of Managua integrate the National Executive Committee of Coordination<sup>10</sup> of the Movement of Municipal Childhood and Adolescence Commissions of Nicaragua.<sup>11</sup>
- One of the strengths of the CMNA is the fact that they have positioned themselves as instructors of childhood and adolescence rights. Among their actions are: trainings on children's rights; implementation of projects as CMNA or supporting their allied organizations (promotion of the right to a name and nationality and campaigns of violence prevention); promote spaces of juvenile participation; attend specific cases of violation or threats of violation of childhood and adolescence rights.
- The CMNA have different levels of organisation and coordination but something they have in common is the lack of municipal diagnoses of difficulties that inhibit or limit the accomplishment of the children's and adolescents' rights. In their application the commissions use information or statistics elaborated principally by the governmental institutions which are in many cases not even shared among all their members.
- The CMNA of Santo Tomás and El Rosario besides their social recognition have been created by municipal orders which is an important factor in their continuity regarding the constant changes of municipal governments.
- Some CMNA integrate in their dynamics the participation of children and adolescents. In Santo Tomás the Territorial Urban Committee works with a Committee of Children; in Palacagüina the Municipal Childhood Commission integrates the Student Federation.
- We observed a tendency to confuse the role of the CMNA with the Offices of Childhood Attention of the local city councils leading to the substitution of functions of some governmental institution through the municipal commissions. For instance, the payment of alimentary pensions in Niquinohomo and El Rosario. It is recommended to work together with the Municipal Commissions to improve their efforts.
- The technical abilities of the members of the CMNA have been strengthened to enable them to employ their knowledge of children's and adolescents' rights and the Civil Participation Law and make them their defenders and promoters. The problem is that there is a constant rotation of the members of the CMNA and that they sometimes express that they are not sufficiently trained. That shows a field of constant work in the process of the municipalization of the rights.

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11As the name says, the National Executive Committee is an executive entity of the Movement of Municipal Childhood and Adolescence Commissions with a participation of 79 municipalities and 5 districts of Managua. They work as an incidence line: Education; Budgets and municipal and national plans; child labour; violence and NNA rights

- The Local Committees of Disaster Prevention, Alleviation and Attention (COLOPRED) and the Municipal Committees of Disaster Prevention, Alleviation and Attention (COMUPRED) were trained, triggering an awareness of all the aspects related to the Local Risk Management and the childhood rights. The COLOPRED have an important role passing on contents to the community committees. These contents are still limited

#### **4. Level of Articulation of the childhood and adolescence rights of Plan International with other development assistance organizations to support the effort to municipalize these rights.**

- In the meetings with the community leaders we could observe an insufficient articulation on the programs and projects carried out by PLAN. This causes wastage and debilitation to the community organization.
- We found only little coordination of PLAN with other institutions and organizations that should be perceived by the community as a consistent projection of development.
- Furthermore we noticed a low level of communication and information of the communities through Plan. Community leaders of Juigalpa, Masatepe and El Rosario expressed that they do not know the actions carried out by PLAN. It appears that there is not sufficient approval of the change from a system of sponsorship to real plans of community development among the local leaders. They claimed that their children were used to ask for money and that Plan only shows up when they need the picture and the letter.<sup>12</sup> If this is true, statistically it is not a very significant number (0,096%) considering the total amount of leaders participating in the query. Even though from a qualitative point of view it is important and should be taken into account.

#### **5. Measure the lessons learned that allow to put the work concerning the incidence and social mobilisation into a system to finally distribute the best practices and establish recommendations about future actions.**

- A project that proposes the incorporation of the childhood rights into the system of municipal planning should include direct actions to develop and improve the institutional abilities of the Municipal Governments and define actions that reduce the risks that depend on the mobility of their authorities.
- In a project to municipalize rights an action plan on a national level as well as on a municipal level is absolutely essential. No evidence has been found that this plan has already been elaborated regarding the national players and the municipal level. An action plan with an integral vision is lacking.
- The distribution of the Civil Participation Law in a format suitable for children, adolescents and adults respectively simplified the perception of the importance of the participation. This material is a significant contribution to the community participation and the social mobilisation.
- Through the project the abilities of a juvenile leadership have been improved. This leadership is a clear contrast to the actual adult leadership with very traditional types of

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<sup>12</sup>Expressions given by community leaders from the communities of Paiwas, Juigalpa, from the municipality of Masatepe and El Rosario in the collective working sessions

leadership and very little democratic culture. In the future it is important to emphasize the form of interaction and creation of spaces between both leaderships.

- The municipal government of Niquinohomo is an example of good practices due to the development of some actions and projects as a result of the demands postulated by the children and adolescents of the urban and rural sectors in the Juvenile Community Assembly. The direct investment in childhood is an indicator of the commitment of the Municipal Government increasing the budget destined to the childhood and adolescence from 2005 to 2006 by 98 % meriting a special mention in the 5. National Conference of Municipal Governments in aid of Childhood and Adolescence Rights.<sup>13</sup>

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135. National Conference of Municipal Governments in aid of Children and Adolescence Rights realized on May 16<sup>th</sup>, 2008 in the Convention Center Crown Plaza. The conference consists of exchange and articulation of experience, incentive and recognition of the labour realized by the mayors together with the members of the Municipal Governments

## VII. Conclusions and Recommendations

### Conclusions

1. Referring to the General Objective, the project contributed effectively to improve the application of children's and adolescents' rights in the selected municipalities stimulating the incidence of the Municipal Childhood and Adolescence Commissions, creating an awareness of their rights, promoting their participation and pointing out the importance of the Local Risk Management.
2. Defining the objectives of the project, actions to minimize the risks of the weak institutions were not foreseen. Furthermore the progresses were affected by a changing national scenario where we have to emphasize the reduction of the activity of CONAPINA and particularly the suspension of the inter-institutional coordination CONAPINA-INIFOM-Plan that were at the head of the integration of the childhood and adolescence rights in the system of local planning.
3. In spite of the suspension of the institutional support of the national actors (CONAPINA and INIFOM), the Network of Municipal Governments in Aid of the Childhood -in which 90 % of the mayors of the selected municipalities participated- and the National Coordination Commission of the CMNA continued promoting and supporting the project on a municipal level. Nevertheless, we found insufficient knowledge about the strategy of the project to integrate childhood rights into the system of local planning among the PLAN staff, the members of the CMNA, the community leaders and the NNA.
4. The occurrences concerning the national actors and the municipal field is inherent in this project even though no specific plan to count the occurrences was used. The efforts were focused on the phase of mobilization of the demands. A complete rating of the occurrences is only obtainable after a complete evaluation of the final results.
5. Even though we found a certain awareness of the childhood and adolescence rights, the community organization has not yet included them as a center line. There is a lack of coordination between the community and the municipal level about a municipal planning system that defines its own terms and times and that works independently without the planning of Plan.
6. In general, the children and adolescents recognize that their participation has helped them to develop on a personal and collective level and they are able to specify the achievements for their communities. The results of the target groups and the sessions with the community leaders show different levels of development regarding the participation of children and adolescents. In some communities their opinion is desired, in a couple of communities the assemblies help to present their demands but only in a few cases they were taken into account to decide about actions that concern them.
7. A young leadership has emerged in the communities alongside to the existence of the community leaders with abilities but traditional types of leadership and little democratic culture and by that limiting the creation of spaces for their participation and interaction in the communities.

8. Although autonomous community organizations and associations have been created, we found the tendency that the community organization has no self-governing function. In the majority they are part of the projects and interests of PLAN. There are community leaders integrated in the CMNA and CDM, many of them Plan volunteers.
9. In the communities it is important to construct a vision of development that includes the rights of children and adolescents in an integral manner. Although there are different organized expressions not all of them coordinate their efforts in aid of the childhood. An exception is the Association of Inhabitants of San Cayetano, community of San Rafael del Sur, that connects 22 organized expressions in the community and that is about to receive its legality. Plan offers opportunities to integrate women into community development on different levels but we perceive that women are not considered as crucial actors from the gender point of view, not in the UP and not in the community groups. In their daily life the majority of the women -except the ones that have leadership positions- are guided by men, coordinators or traditional forms of direction. In the conducted queries a great part of them have the role of òPlan volunteersö on a very passive level unfortunately strengthening the traditional community roles.<sup>14</sup>
10. The incorporation of the focus on Local Risk Management has to be an ongoing process. Except for their participation in school and rescue brigades the children and adolescents are perceived as passive objects that need protection. The Civil Defense is asked to contribute to the construction of an appropriate methodology. The community development is the focus of the sustainability of the project.

## Recommendations

1. The municipal planning system should reflect the vision of development of the communities and of the municipality accomplishment of the childhood rights and incorporate and coordinate the community development plans. The elaboration and employment of municipal public policies that are promoted by the Network of Municipal Governments in Aid of the Childhood and Adolescence can contribute to this important effort.
2. Plan should revive the creation of committees with the involved mayors like it was initially planned in the project due to the fact that during the evaluation no evidence of this entity was found in none of the UP (Program Units). In Managua the coordination with the mayor should be top priority and Plan should focus its labour on the simplification of the decentralization process and create spaces for the participation of the districts.
3. The CMNA are still spaces under construction and their advances depend on the will and willpower of their members. It is very important to be homogenous so that the Ministers instruct their delegates participating in the Municipal Commissions and Municipal Development Committees. This could be strengthened by the inclusion of a clause in the agreements Plan signs with the institutions.

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<sup>14</sup>In the visited groups the percentage of women in leading positions is 25% in comparison with men. In the case of the COLOPRED all presidents are men; 6 women are members of the brigades and 6 women are teachers. The municipalities where we found more leadership among women are: Villa El Carmen, Villa Sandino and Palacagüina and in the communities Pedro Pablo of El Viejo. Only found 4 women working as coordinators of committees. In the rest of the municipalities Plan is working with the so-called òvolunteersö consider in their majority that Plan has helped them very much in their communities but only a support relationship could be observed far away from a real collective leadership

4. The Municipal Assemblies are an expression of participation where children and adolescents present their demands. This should be institutionalized as a permanent mechanism. In addition a monitoring system should be defined to incorporate and finally accomplish their demands in the municipal development plans.
5. For the next stage and for the continuity of the project PLAN should consider a strategy for the UP of Managua and Masatepe (leaving the project) directed to: strengthen the abilities of the leaders and empower the community organizations; stronger application of the rights of children and adolescents and the creation of community development plans. Furthermore, achieve municipal orders to create Municipal Childhood and Adolescence Commissions (CMNA ó Comisiones Municipales de la niñez and adolescencia); institutionalize the Juvenil Assemblies; create Committees of Mayors involved in the project; form alliances with the mayors of the departments and establish indicators for the monitoring of the actions and the contents.
6. Because of its potential PLAN should define more profoundly its crucial role as a provider and attendant of childhood rights on the community, municipal and national level. We recommend to formalize the relationship between Plan and the city councils through agreements that allow to define the commitments of both parts and support community projects.
7. The goal of PLAN requires a unification of gender criteria as an important factor and how to implement it. This process starts with an intern sensitization and the definition of policies and instruments incorporated in the analysis of PLAN taking as a reference point its vision, mission, goals and results. Regarding the project of municipalization of rights PLAN could determine the topics of gender incidence focused on the work with children and adolescents. For instance, the support of networks of women with a gender focus in the municipalities where PLAN is executing projects.
8. The use of planning processes of the UP as an opportunity to incorporate the gender focus starting with a participating consultation of the groups they work with. Most important gender indicators: access, empowering and forms of participation of the women.
9. The process of construction of the Community Development Plans and the diagnosis are the set off point because they are the spaces were different levels of analysis of the population with a gender focus can be realized: who lives in the community, where and in what conditions are their principal elements of (sexual) health, education, production, income, property; elements that allow to distinguish the different conditions of life and expectations of the families Plan is working with.
10. Plan should strengthen the relationship with the Network of Mayors in Aid of the Childhood and Adolescence; Network of Local Development and the National Movement of Municipal Childhood and Adolescence Commissions, determining actions to accomplish the rights of children and adolescents on the national and municipal level.
11. Plan should insist on the elaboration and implementation of municipal public policies through the Network of Municipal Governments in Aid of the Childhood and Adolescence and its members that contribute to the accomplishment of the rights in the municipality. Therefore, a coordination of the efforts between the local and national players is needed. It is important to strengthen the relationships and alliances with the local associations of mayors especially in the UP leaving the project.

12. Design and implement a system of trainings on childhood rights in the community development targeting to parents and community leaders and in the municipal field to decision makers and the institutional staff (City Council, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, etc.). In this effort candidates and future decision makers considering the change of the municipal government should be incorporated too.
  
13. The GLR offers the opportunity to work on the environment and climate change topic but has to define how to connect it. Top priority is to work on a culture of prevention. Together with the Civil Defense and the Ministry of Education (MINED) an appropriate and attractive methodology should be elaborated to contribute to the construction of a culture of risk prevention and reduction.
  
14. In a new stage of the project Plan should develop a data base per municipality, placing the institutions, profiles, projects and financing possibilities, a map of players to have an overview of possibilities and resources. This will allow to coordinate and focus the efforts on the accomplishment of the objectives.
  
15. The diffusion of the achieved results and the discussion of this project with the municipal and community players and Plan should be realized as an opportunity of reflection and exchange that allows to set up clear goals in the implementation of a second stage of the project Municipalization of Children's Rights.

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