



Organization of
American States

17th St. & Constitution Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006
United States of America
T. (202) 458-3000
<http://www.oas.org>

**TRENDS IN TRANSITION POLICIES IN INDIGENOUS, RURAL
AND BORDER COMMUNITIES IN COLOMBIA, CHILE,
PERU AND VENEZUELA:**

CASE STUDIES

(BOOK II)

Organization of American States (OAS)

Executive Secretariat for Comprehensive Development (SEDI);
Department of Human Development, Education and Culture (DHDEC);
Office of Education and Culture (OEC)

Bernard van Leer Foundation

“Trends in Transition Policies in Indigenous, Rural and Border Communities” Project

First published 2010



Organization of
American States

17th St. & Constitution Ave., N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20006
United States of America
T. (202) 458-3000
<http://www.oas.org>

**TRENDS IN TRANSITION POLICIES IN INDIGENOUS, RURAL
AND BORDER COMMUNITIES IN COLOMBIA, CHILE,
PERU AND VENEZUELA:**

CASE STUDES

(BOOK II)

This publication was prepared by the Office of Education and Culture of the Organization of American States (OAS/SEDI/DHDEC/OEC), directed by Ms. Lenore Yaffee García. It is a product of the "Trends in Transition Policies in Indigenous, Rural and Border Communities" project, sponsored by the OAS Inter-American Commission on Education (CIE) and the Bernard van Leer Foundation of the Netherlands, represented by Mr. Leonardo Yanez, the Foundation's Program Officer, who acted as an OAS counterpart in working on the project. The editing of the publication was carried out by Doctors Sara Victoria Alvarado, Héctor Fabio Ospina and Patricia Reyes, from the Center for Advanced Studies in Children and Youth (CINDE), Manizales. The studies were developed by researchers in each country: Chile: Ms. Emma Maldonado and Ms. Nury Gárate from the National Board of Early Childhood Education (JUNJI); Colombia: Dr. Sara Victoria Alvarado and Ms. Martha Solíz, CINDE; Peru: Master Regina Moromizato Iga from the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru, and "Children of the Amazon" Project Coordinator; Venezuela: Ms. Ileana Mendoza; and Ms. Elizabeth Segovia from FEPAP. The Executive Summary and translation into English was carried out by Ms. Arelys Moreno de Yáñez, Consultant in Early Childhood Education and Development at the OAS. The style revision of the overall text was carried out by Office of Education and Culture Consultant, Ms. Camila M. Villanueva. The general coordination of the book's preparation, editing and publishing was carried out by OAS Senior Education Specialist, Dr. Gaby Fujimoto.

Copyright © 2010 by OAS/OEC

All rights reserved.

No part of the material protected by this copyright may be reproduced without permission from the copyright owner.

ISBN 978-0-8270-5626-8

Index

Introduction	4
Executive Summary	5
I. Summary of Book I, Conceptual Advances, and Case Study Findings. Methodological Aspects	15
II. Colombia Case Study Embera Chamí Rural-Indigenous Community	30
III. Chile Case Study Mahuidache Community, 80% Indigenous Mapuche	59
IV. Peru Case Study Teoría Native Community of the Asháninka Ethnic Group	79
V. Venezuela Case Study Añú Ethnic Group of the Laguna de Sinamaica	104
VI. Conclusions and Lessons Learned	122
VII. Communication Strategy for Improving the Quality of Early Childhood Education	127
ANNEX. Workshop with Indigenous Leaders about Home – School Transitions in Indigenous Communities	153
Declaration of the Indigenous Peoples	168

Introduction

The Office of Education and Culture (OEC) of the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Bernard van Leer Foundation (BvLF) are supporting the "*Trends in Transition Policies in Indigenous, Rural and Border Communities*" research project since 2007. It is associated with the "*Policies and Strategies for a Successful Transition to Socialization and School*" project, which has a hemisphere-wide coverage.

The project on policy trends was designed to further transition issues and develop specific social communication, advocacy and dissemination actions, and to offer other countries the study's methodology and specific publications on the findings identified in the reality of indigenous peoples in the rural and border communities of Peru, Brazil, Colombia, Venezuela and Chile. These five countries were the initial group, and the study has gradually been linking others: Bolivia, Mexico, Costa Rica, and Guatemala. More countries are expected to join.

The "*Trends in transition policies in indigenous, rural and border communities*" research was planned in three parts: the first to report on **statistics** in the different countries on specific childcare topics focused on rural, indigenous and border communities—topics previously agreed upon by the country teams. A second part reviews the countries' existing **policies** on the issue of transition in rural, indigenous and border communities. The third part aims to advance a **case study** in each country to gain insight into the phenomenon of transitions in a group considered vulnerable.

Book I was published with the reports of the original five countries on the first two topics—statistics and policies—and is available electronically on the OAS website; a brief summary of which is provided in this book.

This second publication presents the results of the case studies conducted in Chile, Colombia, Peru and Venezuela. As an introduction and context, a chapter is included (Chapter I, Part A) presenting a summary of progress made in the previous stages, both in conceptual terms and as findings on the issues in question.

The report of the outcome of the case studies starts with an explanation of the general methodological aspects agreed upon by the international team (Chapter I, Part B). Later, reports of each one of the countries are presented. In Chile's case, an analysis of the Mahuidache Community—80% indigenous Mapuche—is made; in Colombia it is the Embera Chamí rural indigenous community; in Peru, the Native Community Teoría, Asháninka ethnicity; and in Venezuela, the Añú ethnic group, residing in the Sinamaica Lagoon (Chapters II to V).

Due to the importance of the communication strategy, one chapter describes some of its progress (Chapter VI). Lastly, the conclusions and lessons learned are presented, and a proposal to develop a communication strategy to improve the quality of early childhood education is shared (Chapter VII).

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Chapter I.

Summary of Book I, Conceptual Advances, and Case Study Findings. Methodological Aspects

It is organized into Part A and Part B. Part A presents a summary of some elements of the comprehensive study, progress made, countries involved, some of the most important conceptual elements that have provided a framework to guide both, information searches and the analysis of results. It also presents some general conclusions. Part B presents the methodological aspects of the case studies.

Special attention is paid to various aspects related to transitions: definition, analysis of successful and unsuccessful transitions, incidental factors. Then, the findings from the statistical analysis about early childhood and policies on transitions are discussed, including a list of general recommendations to reverse the current situation.

As for the case studies, an interpretative methodology was used, placing children in transition processes (home-school-children's center) as the unit of analysis. Within this qualitative working methodology, direct observation was used, in-depth interviews and projective techniques as exploration instruments.

Each country has a study with the same elements of analysis: background and context of each location, the description of the lives of children between the ages of zero and eight, the transition process from the perspective of children, families and communities, the conclusions and lessons learned to formulate educational policies.

Chapter II.

Colombia Case Study

Embera Chamí rural-indigenous community, located in the municipality of Riosucio, Caldas department, Colombia. The central axis focuses on the educational transitions that children make between home and preschool and between this and primary education. The study explored supportive actions to promote appropriate transition process—from the home to preschool, and from preschool to first grade of basic education—and critical points present in the transition process between family and school.

The study aimed at making an analysis from the perspective of the comprehensive human development of children. Transitions were examined from three main categories: actors, settings and practices, from which to explore the interests and issues facing indigenous children in their educational transitions from their own representation, that of their families, teachers, educational managers and other institutional actors.

Stakeholders reflected on the daily practices that promote this transition process. Likewise, coordinated work was reviewed from the analysis of the existing relationships between school, family and community, and the relationships between initial education, preschool and elementary school.

After presenting a series of conclusions related to the actors, settings and practices, some lessons learned for educational policy are shared.

Lessons learned from and for educational policy

- Families are key players in facilitating the transition process, but require a process of awareness about the importance of transitions for the holistic development of children.
- It is necessary to support the development of proposals of the proper education in which communities are working.
- It is necessary to promote national policies and coordination mechanisms between the ICBF centers and schools, and among pre-school and first grade of basic education.
- Generate proposals for specialized early childhood education teachers training to support the transition process of children, with emphasis on rural, indigenous and border communities.
- Boys and girls are not seen as actors able to contribute and participate in their own transition process, which limits their overall development and the configuration of social purposeful subjectivities.
- The family, community, school and institutional actors, involved in educational transitions, do not have the coordination levels required to adequately support the processes experienced by children belonging to the Lomaprieta Cañamomo indigenous reservation.
- It is important to learn from the processes of coordination that are managed on a daily basis by mothers, caretakers and teachers, and from there to establish clear guidelines to support these transitions with better conditions for the coordination and continuity in the settings and actions of transitions.
- Vertical transitions are seen as specific events rather than structural periods in which support should be given to children to achieve educational transitions.
- To strengthen the bonds between family, ECD Center and school is a vital explicit strategy to strengthen the processes of educational transition.
- The training of caretakers and teachers should be strengthened to the highest levels since it might determine that children make appropriate processes of transition and school adaptation, thus reducing the dropout and repetition.

Chapter III. Chile Case Study

Briefly describes the context of the Mahuidache Mapuche community, language skills, existing organizations and major sources of income. Rites and beliefs, family characteristics and child-rearing patterns are provided, as well as a description of the kindergarten and participating school.

From the actors' perspective on the transition process, different meanings of kindergarten: education, training, freeing time for mothers, recruiting and training principals and teachers, and children's sense of play are explored. Later, the meaning of school as well as the expectations and facilitating and hindering transitional aspects of child centers and schools are examined.

Conclusions

- The transition process should not be left to chance.
- It was observed that the Mapuche culture is not in favor of separating children from their family group or from contact with their mother at an early stage. As a child rearing practice, they prefer to be with their children during the first three years, incorporating gradually housework

and fieldwork, where they learn from modeling, playing when working and working while they play.

- There are cultural elements and child rearing practices of the Mapuche community, important to know, consider, incorporate or take into account when facilitating the transition to the center.
- There is a general concern for preserving the Mapuche culture and promote the indigenous identity of the children attending the center, but in the classroom that concern is not noticeable.
- The study made clear the need to generate more contact with families.
- With regard to the passage from the center to the school, the study revealed that there is motivation and willingness of teachers of both levels to articulate the transition in the best possible way for children, but there is no formal space of time to do it in a proper way, which causes a deficit of transition actions and a lack of joint provision of the organizational work of the teaching team.

Lessons learned from and for educational policy

- It is essential to support early transition processes through clear guidance from the teacher training. This involves inter-institutional coordination for establishing orientations and guidelines leading to the development of a transitional policy and the implementation of concrete and relevant actions.
- The interest shown by parents in the educational process of their children, and their demonstrated ability to perform actions on that line, suggests the need to strengthen the role of the family as educational agent, creating and/or permanently reinforcing the coordination of actions between family and center.
- It is necessary to strengthen the coordinated work of teachers that take place in a single educational space, so as to achieve more efficient work, developing the training and exchange of knowledge, reflect on practice and produce new knowledge from reflection.
- The specific policy should consider ways to encourage motivation in teachers working in remote areas to conduct refresher courses in education.
- If you want to strengthen indigenous identity in children of school gardens or embedded in indigenous communities and reinforce bilingual learning, there is a need for intercultural education agents who handle the language and culture in an expeditious manner.
- The guidelines should be directed to the review of the methodologies used in the first year and look for more subtle ways to incorporate other methodologies different from "notebook, pencil and eraser," reinforcing the use of appropriate materials for working with children from the first year of basic education.

Chapter IV. Peru Case Study

The study is qualitative transversal exploratory-descriptive, with an interpretive approach. Information was collected through qualitative methods (observation of events, interviews, projective techniques), which has allowed a characterization and understanding (as far as the limits allow) on the dimensions and variables selected for the study.

A conceptual review about transitions is performed, and the context, settings and actors in the community are explored: socio-economic and cultural family traits, child-rearing, involvement of family members, and perception of education. Next, the characterization of care and educational programs is reviewed: coverage, teacher training, infrastructure and teaching methodology.

Together with the stakeholders a reflection was conducted on the characteristics of the children of the community at different levels of care and education as well as internal and external factors that characterize successful transitions.

The findings are based on the elements discussed in the first book on the definition of transitions in general and of educational transitions in particular. Other conclusions are derived from the cases studied in the Teoría Community.

Some lessons learned and recommendations for education policy

Teachers do not have enough tools to develop a proposal for education in rural areas, especially if they are rooted in primitive a-graphic societies, apart from the complexity inherent to bilingualism or multilingualism.

- The little consistency and continuity among the purposes and methodologies used at different levels of education do not help children build learning.
- The educational infrastructure is poor and lack materials that can support the development of classes to help in the development of symbolic function, as a prerequisite for the internalization of learning can promote the development of thought.
- The absence of an overall look on the reality of education in these populations requires schools to be institutions to convene and support intersectoral action and parents' involvement.
- Lack of an efficient teacher accompanying system, especially for those who due to distance cannot have access to information.
- The disorder in the educational system dragged for years, helps to deepen the educational gaps between urban and rural, between public and private.
- The economic constraints of families constitute a factor that alienates children from schools.
- Working with families should be nuclear in the educational processes, especially in those contexts where the sectors involved must put more efforts to reach families in a coordinated way and with uniform criteria of information.
- The educational system must, in practice, recognize families as key partners in achieving school learning, overcoming an instrumentalist approach.

Finally, a number of very positive aspects seen in indigenous contexts that can help improve education are mentioned. A list of demands that society and government must be able to resolve is provided.

Chapter V. Venezuela Case Study

The research team selected six children from the Añú people, living in the Sinamaica Lagoon, Zulia state, for the Venezuela case study, in order to comprehensively learn about the transition process experienced by children between the ages of zero and eight belonging to these communities.

The chapter presents a brief description of the context of this community, language skills, existing organizations and major sources of income, rites and beliefs, family characteristics, child rearing patterns and a description of the Angelito Añú Multihogar, and the Bolivarian School New World and Sinamaica.

The meaning of the Children's Center and School, as well as expectations and facilitating and hindering aspects of transitions was explored, from the perspective of the transition process stakeholders.

Conclusions

- The Añú children in the study receive support from parents and other significant adults in the community to attend the educational institutions. These children like the school and their teachers.
- The socio-cultural and economic conditions in which families in the Sinamaica Lagoon live—despite hindering the transition processes of children in the study—are compensated by the presence of a loving, but little-trained, teacher who provides recognition of children's demonstrated capabilities and who stimulates their desire to learn.
- The family context and the expression of its dynamic as socio-productive unit, is another mediator for a successful transition from home to the center and from this to the school.
- Children's registration to schools is positive because they evoke children's households using small decorative objects made from "enea," the main raw material in the area for weaving, and other household items.
- It is perceived in families of children in the study, particularly mothers, a high degree of support in the accompaniment to the education of the children, also reinforced by older siblings, regardless of their educational level.
- The presence of native teachers, in the case of the Children's Center, guarantees the socio-cultural recognition and respect of children's needs, resulting in their adaptation to school.
- Some motivating factors offered by the school to engage their Añú children to develop learning abilities are: 1) Size and lighting of interior spaces. 2) Social interaction, for the exchange of children. 3) Promote non-traditional games. 4) Use of school uniform (donated by the state). 5) Transfer by boat with outboard motor, since not all children have opportunities to use it. 6) Food (breakfast, lunch and snack) offered by the school and day care centers is also an attraction for children, parents or relatives.

Lessons learned from and for educational policy

- The family daily activities within their own indigenous culture represent for children meaningful opportunities to acquire experience and knowledge for future adult life. Individual learning experiences are capitalized by the school, to ensure greater socio-cultural relevance of the curriculum.
- The figure of the family in their role as educational agent is very important for its influence, and so should be re-conceptualized by policy makers.
- There is a lack of policy guidelines aimed at developing and strengthening capacities of the child and family to address and resolve unfavorable situations.

- There is a need to create synergy between the different educational actors in search of training activities that benefit children younger than eight. To do this, it is necessary to convert the school into a community whose members become apprentices in constant interaction, guided by the principles of social co-responsibility and lifelong learning for the benefit of younger children.
- Policies should consider developing and updating training plans for teaching and teachers to provide them with better and more tools for quality early childhood education. It is also necessary to create awareness and train principals and teachers on the topic of transitions as a strategy to minimize the phenomena of repetition, school dropout and frustration.
- Bilingual Intercultural Education (BIE) requires the look—for many years focused on primary education—to the level of initial education for the benefit of younger children. At the policy level, this would translate into greater complementarity of curricula, new instructional strategies and appropriate care, child care, new and more effective, relevant and useful ways to make a kind of education that takes into account the child rearing patterns of indigenous peoples.

Chapter VI.

Conclusions and Lessons Learned

Conclusions

There is awareness in adults—parents, teachers—of the importance of actions to achieve successful transitions, although usually they are not faced with planned actions.

In Colombia, for example, even though the policy states important programmatic link between the Homes of Family Welfare, serving in education and care for infants from zero to five years, there are no guidelines that in practice bring them closer to institutions in the education sector. Although there are some advances in vertical coordination between preschool and primary education, there are still no specific guidelines, nor are there special approaches to indigenous communities.

The experience of the case study in Colombia suggests that in all settings, stakeholders perform practices supportive to the transitions with different levels of formalization and structure. Indigenous communities themselves incorporate in their culture practices that facilitate the transition process. Such is the case of the Mapuche Community studied by Chile and the Añú from Venezuela, where certain customs are clearly supportive to successful transitions.

The presence of native teachers in the communities plays an important role in helping children in their process of adjustment to school environments. Teachers are aware of the importance of incorporating in the room decoration some elements of the indigenous communities to use for playing or as educational materials, but in practice are seldom used, except in the Añú Community (Venezuela). Teachers are not specialized in early childhood education, and in some of the communities studied not even in the indigenous culture of the group they serve.

Overall in the families studied, there is particular interest in the adaption of their children to daycare homes or schools and they try to facilitate it. They do it in an affectionate and intuitive way, with the collaboration of also affectionate teachers.

In Peru, children whose parents have clear and high expectations on their children's education and positive personal relationships and good communication, not only show good processes of transition, but

high school achievement. Children from the Peruvian indigenous community studied show poorly developed skills in urban settings: physical control, assuming responsibility and cooperative work from an early age, "reading" information for weather changes from observation, among others.

In the case of Venezuela, teachers and parents are loving and concerned with their children's development and education, which counteracts poverty. The selected children respond with adaptive capacity and take the challenge to actively participate in their development and learning.

In the Añú culture, in Venezuela, it is evident the close relationship of the mother to the child until he or she is four years old, which contributes to self-reliance and the development of various cognitive skills to solve problems, getting them ready for major moments of change in their life.

In the communities studied in Peru and Venezuela, an important role of older brothers was found, since consciously or unconsciously, they support their younger siblings and become role models, thereby facilitating transitions.

In the community homes or day care centers, or "gardens" in Colombia, mothers who work there take their own household practices and those of the community to the school context, creating a warm environment that facilitates the process of adaptation of children.

Lessons learned from and for education policy in the four countries

- The interest shown by parents in the educational process of their children, and their demonstrated ability to perform actions on that line, suggests the need to strengthen the family role as an educational agent, creating and/or strengthening permanent transition actions family-center.
- Parents need more information on education and child development, to help establish development goals for their children based on positive expectations. Working with families should be nuclear in educational processes, especially in these contexts. The sectors involved should put more efforts to reach families in a coordinated way and with uniform criteria in the information. It is vital to strengthen ties between family, center and school as an explicit strategy to strengthen the processes of educational transition.
- As the researchers point out in the Peruvian case, there is a need that the educational system recognizes families in practice as key partners in achieving school learning, overcoming an instrumentalist approach.
- One aspect to consider in policy is the inclusion of guidelines aimed at developing and strengthening capacities of the child and family to address and resolve unfavorable situations.
- The family daily activities within their own indigenous culture represent for children significant opportunities to acquire experience and knowledge for future adult life.
- It is important to learn from the processes of transition that are daily managed by mothers, caretakers and teachers, and from there to establish clear guidelines to support these transitions with better conditions for the association and continuity in the settings and actions of transitions.
- It is essential to support early transition processes through clear guidance on teacher training activities so that they can implement the appropriate procedures at the right time. This involves coordinating inter-agency guidelines and directives for the implementation of concrete and relevant actions.

- It is necessary to strengthen the joint work of teachers that take place in a single educational space, to streamline work, promote training and exchange of knowledge, reflect on practice and produce new knowledge from that reflective action.
- To strengthen indigenous identity in children of centers or schools embedded in indigenous communities and reinforce bilingual learning, it is necessary to have intercultural educational agents who handle the language and culture in an expeditious manner.
- It is not enough that children from the centers know and visit the school and its rooms, as the offset occurs at the turn of one methodology to another and from there the transition process is broken. The guidelines should be directed to the review of the methodologies used in the first year of basic education. It is urgent to find more subtle ways of incorporating other methodologies that are not "notebook, pencil and eraser," reinforcing the use of other materials suitable for work with children of this grade.
- The disorder that often affects the educational system and that has been dragged for years, contributes to deepen the educational gaps between urban and rural, between public and private. It is urgent to address this issue.
- Lessons should be learned from the organizational capacity of indigenous communities: they have a system of participation in decision making and it is through this system that often they find answers to their problems.
- The rural context offers endless opportunities for development and learning of children and these communities have a diversity of environments and natural resources, i.e. they are a learning laboratory for the open field. However it is not used or exploited by the educational system, which insists that education occurs within the four walls of schools.
- Bilingual Intercultural Education (BIE) requires the look—for many years focused on primary education—to the level of initial education, to benefit younger children. At the policy level, this could mean a greater coordination of curricula, new instructional strategies and appropriate care and childcare as well as new, more effective, relevant and useful ways to develop education by taking into account the child rearing patterns of indigenous peoples.

Some recommendations:

- 1 . Improve education decentralization mechanisms seeking more closeness to the population.
- 2 . Improve intersectoral action: although there is one sector responsible for education, problems are multiple and complex factors
- 3 . Increase the capacity of teachers to plan and manage education with a long-term perspective and vision.
- 4 . Achieve a National Alliance for Education, especially for the benefit of the most vulnerable populations, and invest in more research in order to have solid underpinnings for the construction of "thoughtful "educational proposals.
- 5 . Review and strengthen strategies for teacher training and support from a holistic approach.

Chapter VII.

Communication Strategy for Improving the Quality of Early Childhood Education

The development of the communication strategy is based on all the research and scientific findings on early childhood. Therefore, the communicative approach is taken from a cultural perspective, which

means that the interaction processes are loaded with meaning and undertake the field of everyday life, social and cultural dynamics, the public sphere, the sensitivities and collective identities.

The messages issued by the various media groups in each country from this strategy were developed from an action plan which aimed to identify clear objectives in order to consolidate the target set in the communication component.

The aim of the strategy was promote and publicize the importance of quality education in early childhood through communication campaigns to raise awareness, advocate, mobilize society and support the generation of public policies and actions for early childhood.

Designing the strategy involves thinking in its scope. This relates to the levels of involvement and participation that the target audience gives to the project. With these references, the communication strategy established and executed three components, each of which has objectives, activities and products. These three components are: Information dissemination; Capacity building and Advocacy.

Some progress in the areas of communication

The meeting with communicators from Spain, Nicaragua, Argentina, Mexico, Colombia, Peru, Chile, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago was held from 25 to 29 May 2009 in Chile, and allowed to reflect on and analyze the paper that conceives the conceptual guidelines of the "Communication Strategy for Improving Quality of Early Childhood Education, " presented by the OAS.

After three working sessions, the group reached the following conclusions:

- Communication should be viewed as a discipline that crosses the whole concept of early childhood. This approach is reflected in the document presented by the OAS.
- The objectives proposed in the strategy were endorsed by the participating countries. It was agreed to implement the three components of the strategy taking into account the actions taken by countries. It is suggested to do a tracking of the experiences.
- As for the communication products, reference was made to the communication campaign "Seven is Too Late" from Turkey, and the experience of Guatemala through the International Children's Fund (now Christian Children Fund), to be high-impact experiences in each country.
- The duration of the strategy was assessed; the group agreed that it was a suitable time to meet the objectives proposed (three years of the project).
- The delegates of the countries expressed interest and commitment to the development of the strategy. They promised to contact the journalists who can lead this process in each country.
- Regarding the actions included in the communication strategy, the group of communicators from different countries agreed on the need to strengthen the database as dynamic collaborative networks that allow communication to flow.
- Regarding the site of ECD, it was considered an initiative of great significance because it allows projection and channels information not only to the recipients but also to the same issuer.
- It is essential to coordinate the communication strategy to the various activities being developed by the countries.

After consolidating their commitment, willingness and need to carry out this strategy, the delegates of the countries made specific contributions to each process. They also participated actively in the development of the cards that would allow strengthening perceptions about the strategy, the communicator profile and actions of each country. These actions were associated with other project on the use of networks and technologies.

Experiences in implementing the communication strategy in some countries

Regarding the case studies within the "***Trends in transition policies in indigenous, rural and border communities***" research project, countries that have been linked to the study have begun to advance some actions foreseen in the overall communications strategy and in the resulting documents containing details of the recent meeting of communicators in Chile, in May 2009. In the corresponding chapter the proposal developments and achievements in the goals of the communications theme are presented for three of the study's countries: Colombia, Peru and Chile.

**Chapter I. SUMMARY OF BOOK I, CONCEPTUAL ADVANCES, AND CASE STUDY
FINDINGS. METHODOLOGICAL ASPECTS**

Introduction. Part A. 1. General Characteristics of the “Trends in Transition Policies in Indigenous, Rural and Border Communities” Study. 1.1. General Objective of the Project. 1.2. Purpose of the Study. 1.3. Stages and Phases of the Study. 1.3.1. A Three-Tiered Approach. 1.3.2. Phases: Linking Countries to the Study. 1.4. Some Conceptual Elements. 1.4.1. The Concept of Transitions. 1.4.2. Successful or Satisfactory Transitions and Associated Factors. 1.5. General Conclusions Based on Progress in Stages 1 and 2 of Phases 1 and 2. 1.5.1. Trends in Early Childhood Policies in Latin America as they Relate to Educational Transitions among Indigenous, Rural and Border Communities. 1.5.1.1. Regional Policies. 1.5.1.2. Policies and their Implementation in Countries Covered by the Study. 1.5.2. Conclusions from the Statistical Data in Countries Participating in the Study. 1.5.3. Factors that Help Children Make Satisfactory Transitions, From the Theoretical Perspective and in Light of Other Transition Studies. 1.5.4. Reconstructing the Approach to Transitions as an Opportunity and not a Disadvantage. 1.5.5. What is Needed to Correct the Current Situation. Part B. 2. Methodological Aspects of the Case Studies. 2.1. Analysis Units and Sample. 2.2. Methodological Approach. 2.3. Questions. 2.4. Techniques. 2.5. Records Compiled. 2.6. Analysis. 2.7. Outline of the Reports. Chapter 1: Background. Chapter 2: Transitions from Birth to Age Eight as Seen by the Various Stakeholders. Chapter 3: Conclusions. Chapter 4: Lessons Learned From and For Education Policy. 2.8. Communities in which the Case Studies were Conducted, by Country.

Introduction

This chapter is organized in two sections. Part A reviews selected elements from the general study, progress achieved, countries involved, and some of the more important conceptual elements that served as a framework for guiding research and analyzing the results. It also presents some of the general conclusions from the two previous stages. All of this will set the context for understanding the outcomes of the case studies examined in this publication. In part B, the methodological aspects of the case studies are explained.

Part A

1. General Characteristics of the “Trends in Transition Policies in Indigenous, Rural and Border Communities” Study

1.1. General Objective of the Project

To support member countries in their efforts to develop and strengthen policies and strategies that will help extend and improve the quality and coverage of education and care for children from birth to the age of eight, so as to facilitate their successful transition from the home to preschool programs, and from preschool to primary education.

1.2. Purpose of the Study

- a) Compile and consolidate existing information on trends in early childhood education and care with special emphasis on rural, indigenous and border communities;
- b) Identify and organize a process for analyzing and evaluating regional policies and trends in early childhood education/transitions, from a multi- and inter-sectoral approach;
- c) Create the institutional capacity for policymakers and for national and local preschool and primary education supervisors dealing with rural, indigenous and border communities;
- d) Delve further into transition issues and develop specific actions for social communication, advocacy and dissemination;
- e) Make the methodology of the study and specific publications on factual findings in indigenous, rural and border communities available to other countries;
- f) Appreciate progress in countries and sub-regions;
- g) Develop new theoretical and practical elements;
- h) Evaluate the situation in preschool and primary education;
- i) Assess lessons and challenges in the design, implementation, and evaluation of education policies from preschool to the first two years of primary education in the hemisphere.

1.3. Stages and Phases of the Study

1.3.1. Stages: A Three-Tiered Approach

1. Statistics and their analysis: compilation of statistics on specific topics in early childhood care focusing on rural, indigenous and border communities (topics previously agreed upon by the teams)..
2. Meta-reading of policies: compiling all policies dealing with children through the age of eight in various sectors (health, education, family, labor, social security etc.) relating to the transitions topic and focusing on rural, indigenous and border communities..
3. Empirical analysis: case studies: for a comprehensive understanding of transition processes in children from birth to eight years in rural, indigenous and border communities, relating to educational experiences offered in their place of residence.

1.3.2. Phases: Linking Countries to the Study

To date, we may speak of two phases. In the first, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Peru and Venezuela were linked, whose research teams advanced Stages 1, 2 and 3 mentioned in section 1.3.1.

Two publications emerged from this initial phase: the first summarizes the reports from Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Peru and Venezuela relating to statistics and policies. The second—this one—compiles the reports from those case studies, with the exception of Brazil.

While the countries involved in the first phase were conducting their case studies, new countries were added, beginning with stages 1 and 2: Mexico, Bolivia, Costa Rica and Guatemala. At present, Mexico is finalizing its case study. This is then phase 2 which, although chronologically subsequent to the first, in fact overlaps it (the second begins before the first ends).

1.4. Some Conceptual Elements

1.4.1. The Concept of Transitions

Transitions are understood as “critical moments of change that children experience in moving from one environment to another, opening opportunities for their human development and their learning for life and school.”

The transition that children make from the home to their first school experience, and the move from preschool to primary school and on to secondary school, are changes that may become unsuccessful transitions, and is a particular risk in the case of vulnerable groups such as rural, indigenous and border communities.

Repetition and dropout rates are alarmingly high among vulnerable groups such as rural, indigenous and border communities, and transition phenomena are associated with this.

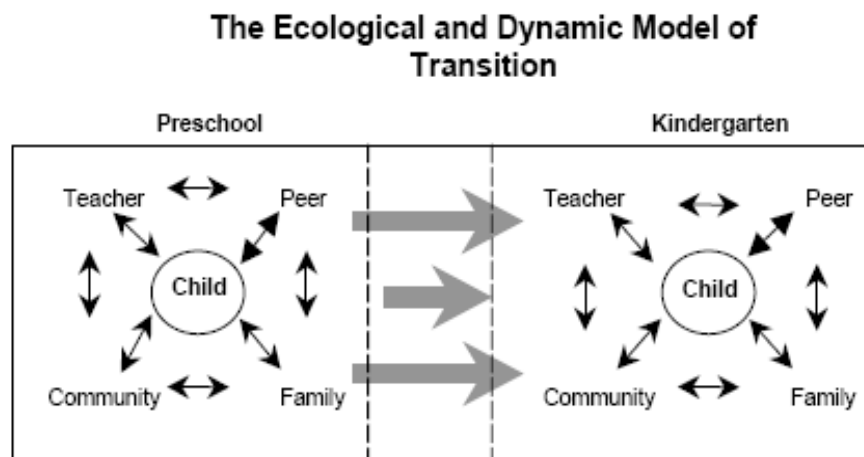
Fabian & Dunlop view transition as the change that children make from one educational setting or phase to another over time, posing challenges from the viewpoint of social relationships, teaching style, environment, space, time, learning contexts, and learning itself. This makes the process intense and fraught with accelerated demands.

For Peralta, transition implies a process in which we may distinguish three sub-processes: continuity, progression and differentiation, giving the impression of interrelationship and, at certain points, of sequence. She notes that *"each of them plays a role in the move to the new state. One gives stability while the second complicates the achievement, and the third offers the change to be achieved."* The author also indicates that we must add to these *internal sub-processes* (which the person constructs

internally) the concept of articulation, as an external mechanism that serves to link each new stage reached.

Initial situation:	Transition:	End situation:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - family circle, socialization and enculturation; - characteristics of the child 	Continuity: values Progression: empowerment Differentiation: familiarity with the classroom, teacher, language, activities, etc.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The program in which the child is to be incorporated; - Formal/non-formal - program quality

The dynamic aspect, different interrelationships and players that intersect in attempting to explain this concept of transitions can be understood readily from the following graph, reproduced by Peralta:



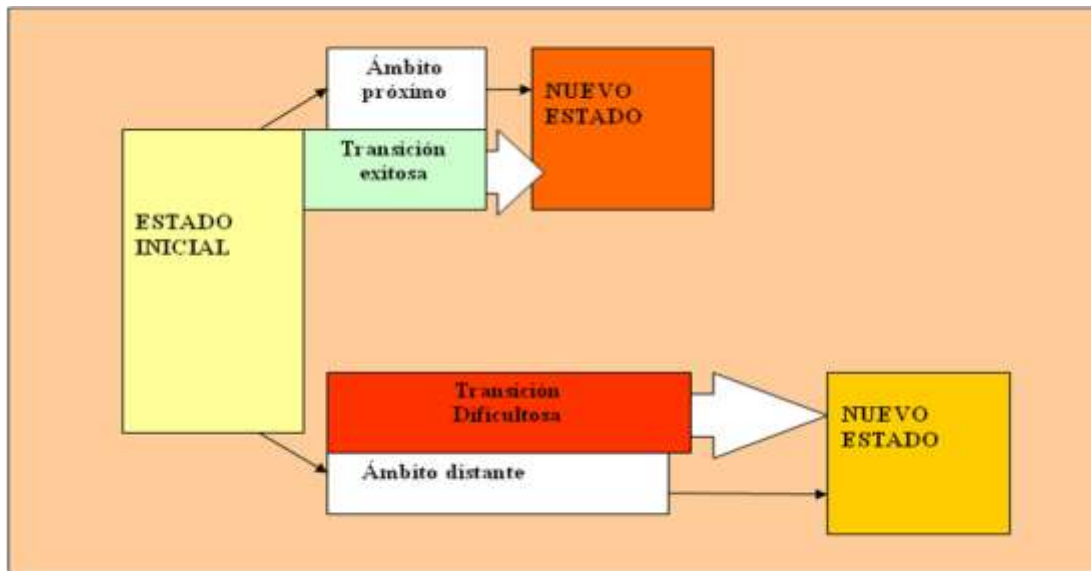
Taken from Kraft-Sayre & Pianta (2000). *Enhancing the Transition to Kindergarten: Linking Children, Families & Schools*. Charlottesville, VA: National Center for Early Development & Learning, University of Virginia.

1.4.2. Successful or Satisfactory Transitions and Associated Factors

The definition of transitions used in the context of this project seeks to specify the qualification of "successful" on the basis of indicators relating to children's entry and retention in the education system. This should have a favorable impact on learning in its cognitive, emotional and physical dimensions that will equip children with tools for readily integrating and adapting themselves to the changing spaces throughout their lives.

To speak of satisfactory educational transitions not only implies the existence of education services that make for continuity between levels, but also poses the basic question of whether that continuity contributes to reversing academic failure.

When does a transition become unsuccessful?



In today's educational continuum there is a very important question as to how much early childhood education contributes to developing the skills needed to perform "successfully" in the future, and how the conditions of adversity that surround a child may limit the full development of his or her potential. This may also be associated with environmental issues such as sanitation conditions, or the child's state of health or nutrition.

The conceptual framework adopted here starts from a broad vision of human development. Taking up the argument of Alvarado, 2008, this study will treat transitions as an aspect that cannot be divorced from a comprehensive concept of children's human development, understanding this as the process of constituting a child's subjectivity and identity through socialization.

Human development is in this sense "an active process by which the child constitutes him or herself in his or her individual and social dimensions, which he or she does through daily interactions with his or her surroundings. To become a subject implies for the child achieving an awareness of him or herself and daily surroundings, and positioning him or herself vis-à-vis the ways of ordering and organizing everyday life" (Alvarado, S. V. & Ospina, H., 2005, 2006).

This perspective stresses the importance of "strengthening the emotional, communicative, creative, ethical/moral and political potential of children and youth, which allows them to constitute and position themselves in the world, construct shared meanings, and organize themselves as a 'we' capable of transforming subjective and objective reality through their participation in common projects in conflictive contexts and practices, in which they can recognize the others as legitimate adversaries, each with their own face and voice."

As is clear from this perspective, "transition processes cannot be divorced from the multiple dimensions of the child's development. For this reason, educational environments, agents and their practices must respond to the potential for constructing the subjectivity that is present in children so they can build an identity as distinct from others—one that will be different and empowering. In this sense, transitions constitute challenges for children, which they must face in the midst of the conflict sparked by the many changes they are called to make as an inherent condition of the transits and transformations of human beings throughout the course of their lives."

Researcher Rocio Abello (2008) offered a careful documentary tracking of the transitions issue, to which we shall make extensive reference here, in order to enrich the perspective of this study. According to her, transitions are a problem primarily because of the different contexts through which children pass—the home to preschool, and preschool to primary school—where the discontinuities between the two environments are accentuated. This means that children, schools and families alike must be prepared for the process, anticipating the required articulations. It also means that each must recognize the expectations of the others, so that both vertical and horizontal articulations will be possible.

From a human development perspective, it is important to examine the construction of the normative constraint in the child and to ask: how do children put into operation their capacity for learning to learn within the broad framework of principles of human development? Do horizontal and vertical articulations have an impact on children? (Abello, 2008).

Abello (2008), quoting Fabian & Dunlop (2006) in works from 2002 and 2005, defines transition as "the process of change that children make from one setting or phase of education to another over time." Changes of relationship, teaching style, environment, space, time, learning contexts, and learning itself combine at moments of transition to make intense and accelerated demands. Change can bring the opportunity to learn new things, but it can also bring an element of apprehension of the unknown "that can cause confusion and anxiety, leaving an impression that may still affect behavior many years later."

Consequently, addressing transitions conscientiously requires an articulated effort by the family, school, community and other local institutions. Citing Kagan, Carroll, Comer and Scott-Little (2006), Abello states that "transitions require emphasis on alignment of standards, curriculum and assessment practices across the early grades. This alignment, or lack thereof, will have a significant impact on children's experience. It is a condition for children to experience continuity between one grade and the next" (p. 135).

For Abello, transitions are complex phenomena in which there are cross-tensions between continuity and discontinuity, between the convergent and the divergent, and between the dominant culture and the emerging one, as the possibility of being human and of constructing subjectivity."

Abello uses new categories for grouping the studies on transitions. These are:

- (i) The effect of transitions on the child's development and learning.
- (ii) How children and parents experience transitions.
- (iii) Expectations of the various players about transitions.
- (iv) Transitions from various perspectives.
- (v) The impacts of parents' involvement in academic achievement.
- (vi) Demonstration strategies for handling transitions.
- (vii) Strategies to guarantee continuity between preschool and school.
- (viii) The impacts of early childhood education.
- (ix) The effects of comprehensive services provided through intersectorally articulated actions.

Internal and external factors impact transitions. Internal factors are those relating to emotional and cognitive development. External (or articulating) factors include emotional support, children's capacity to build on their strengths, the nuclear family's attitude to change, activities in preparation for

new situations, support in the face of new situations, definition of situations of continuity, progression and differentiation, identification of new states reached, and control over conditions of accessibility.

Transitions within early childhood education programs are facilitated by a shared educational vision, expressed in certain common codes and ways of acting on the part of people who interact with children. The frequency and characteristics of communication between parents and school are predictors of academic success.

The capacity for emotional self-governance to deal with uncertainty, peer networks of social support and relations with the teacher, through which social skills unfold, and the capacity to address the challenges of school in cognitive terms are key dimensions for rethinking the way children face transitions.

General Factors that Impact Transitions

Socio-cultural context

Internal Factors	External (articulating) Factors
<u>Emotional development:</u> - basic trust, - security, - self-esteem, - resilience, - repertoire of adaptive strategies, - attitudes to change.	- emotional support, - capacity to promote children's strengths, - the nuclear family's attitude to change, - activities to prepare for new situations, - support in dealing with new situations, - definition of situations of continuity, progression and differentiation, - identification of achievable new states, - control over conditions of accessibility.
<u>Cognitive development:</u> - knowledge of the new surroundings, - abilities to interpret other codes (emotional, cognitive, linguistic).	

- Facilitation of articulation through the effects of education infrastructure.
- Articulation through shared cultural practices that have meanings for children.
- Pedagogical articulation:
 - Explicit education policies and standards.
 - General pedagogical principles and criteria.
 - Concepts of the child and the role of educators.
 - School management.
 - The contribution of parents and family.
- Curriculum articulation at the macro and micro levels.
- Articulation of wills (the psychological aspect).

1.5. General Conclusions Based on Progress in Stages 1 and 2 of Phases 1 and 2

1.5.1. Trends in Early Childhood Policies in Latin America as they Relate to Educational Transitions among Indigenous, Rural and Border Communities

1.5.1.1. Regional Policies

- a) X Ibero-American Conference on Education (Panama City, Panama, July 3 and 4, 2000). Declaration of Panama, "Early Childhood Education in the 21st Century:"

"We highlight the importance of strengthening the specific and special nature of early childhood education, within a development strategy articulated with the other levels of the education system, especially for developing effective reading and writing skills at appropriate moments."

- b) Hemispheric Commitment to Early Childhood Education, V Meeting of Ministers of Education, OAS, 2007:

"Formulate policies and educational, inter-institutional, and inter-sectoral coordination strategies for the successful transition of children between the different stages in early childhood."

1.5.1.2. Policies and their Implementation in Countries Covered by the Study

With some differing shades of emphasis, the national policies of all these countries show a determination to support education transition processes, and to assist in the experience of transition from the family into the education system, especially with respect to valuing people's original culture, with concern for the positioning and visibility of indigenous communities and their culture in the field of education.

All of the countries have defined policies, programs and actions to care for young children. However, actions fall far short of policies and program goals.

The country reports highlight the fact that, despite a wealth of legislation, the documents provide no details on educational transitions. These are included as a component referring to the vertical transitions involved in the move from preschool to basic primary school, from an institutional viewpoint, without really addressing the issue of transitions from home to initial education. There are no mechanisms or resources for monitoring educational transitions.

Although all policy documents dealing with early childhood care and education mention the need for intersectoral action, there are gaps that impede intersectoral initiatives, such as the absence of basic, standardized criteria for the functioning, continuity and complementarity of programs, the lack of mechanisms for integrating information, and the impossibility of reconciling data from different sectors, all of which makes it difficult to establish priorities and goals.

Achieving the mandates of education policy and the targets that the sector has set for itself (in terms of early childhood education and care) will require efficient management of the education system. This implies active participation by the various stakeholder entities, adequate funding for implementing policies, efficiency and transparency in the use of resources, intersectoral action to ensure a comprehensive approach, and a human resources team that is committed and performs its functions at a high level. In general terms, with respect to the coordination process, it seems important to adopt strategies to articulate the different spheres of national public policy for integral attention and work with children, their family and community.

As we have noted, there are at present legal frameworks in place that are favorable to young children, especially those living in rural and indigenous communities, and they are favorable as well to successful transition processes. The weakness lies in the mechanisms and the ways adopted for implementing policies, which will require preparing the corresponding bodies (decentralized levels of government), preparing and informing program operators, improving public staffing mechanisms,

strengthening program strategies in light of the local context, and providing greater information and opportunities for public participation.

1.5.2. Conclusions from the Statistical Data in Countries Participating in the Study

- 1 There is great inequity in these countries, and it primarily affects those living in rural, indigenous and border communities.
- 2 The indigenous populations in these countries represent a small proportion of the total (in Colombia 3.43%, in Chile 4.6%, in Venezuela 2.2%, and in Brazil 0.2%, while in Peru they are submerged in the statistics for the rural population, which is 26%), yet they bear the heaviest burdens.
- 3 Gaps in coverage between the urban population and rural and indigenous groups:
 - Colombia: initial education 39% (urban) and 25% (rural). There is no data on indigenous populations.
 - Chile: indigenous population over the age of ten—8.2% literacy rate compared to 4% nationwide.
 - Peru: eight out of ten rural children live in poverty, 11 of every 100 indigenous children receive bilingual intercultural education.
 - Brazil: 56.2% indigenous enrollment rate, compared to 68.3% nationwide.
 - In all countries covered by the study, chronic malnutrition rates among indigenous, rural and border communities are above the national averages.
- 4 Family poverty means that children are undernourished, their parents devote little time or attention to them and are unaware of adequate stimuli (quality of care), and attach low priority to preschool education, nutritional conditions for pregnant and nursing mothers are inadequate, domestic violence is widespread. Women who are heads of household are overwhelmed by their responsibilities. In other words, families do not have the resources and the capacity to monitor educational transitions.
- 5 Chile has the best record, not only because it has made a significant decrease in poverty indexes, but also because it has achieved broad coverage in early childhood care and education for the most vulnerable groups, having reduced the illiteracy rate to 3.9% and increased the average length of schooling to ten years. Yet Chile still has a very inequitable pattern of wealth distribution (which is true *a fortiori* in the other countries).
- 6 Generally speaking, national statistics on specific aspects (morbidity and mortality, vaccination systems, HIV/AIDS infection, disabilities, malnutrition, civil registry, child labor, mistreatment etc.) do not contain disaggregated data for rural, indigenous and border communities. However, recognizing that marginalization is greatest among these population groups, we may expect that their maternal and child mortality indices are significant.
- 7 Early childhood care and education is better than it was, but it is still insufficient.
- 8 Rural schools are at a disadvantage in comparison with urban schools.
- 9 The highest repetition rates are in basic education, especially in the first three grades. Dropout rates are declining.
- 10 The education problem must be given greater visibility, particularly for rural and border communities, which means refining the mechanisms and instruments for recording

- information to make sure they cover this population, including children under the age of three.
- 11 Failure rates are particularly high in the first three grades of basic education.
 - 12 Thanks to policies and programs aimed at keeping children in school, dropout rates are declining, but they are still high among the most vulnerable population groups.
 - 13 Schools are not responding to the particular needs of the most vulnerable groups, nor are they sufficiently accommodating to help families with their children's development: the quality of instruction is poor and teachers receive little support in their task (performances are poorest among children in public schools, and worse yet in rural public schools).
 - 14 While the provision of preschool services for children three years and older has improved, they are still rare in rural, indigenous and border communities. The poorest and most disadvantaged children in rural and indigenous areas have no access to early childhood education and care programs, and yet these are the groups with the greatest needs in terms of health, nutrition and cognitive development.
 - 15 The available indicators show that a high percentage of indigenous groups have lost their native tongue or use it only within the family, and occasionally in closed communities.
 - 16 Five-year-olds are being enrolled too early in the first grades of primary school, a factor that contributes to high repetition and dropout rates, because their stage of development is not sufficient to master the learning required for this cycle of study.
 - 17 The quality of instruction is poor, and teachers receive little support in their tasks (performances are poorest among children in public schools, and worse yet in rural public schools).
 - 18 Education programs need to be made more attractive and child-friendly.
 - 19 Teachers need greater skill in monitoring children's learning and transitions.
 - 20 Teachers must be trained for the bilingual intercultural schools.

1.5.3. Factors that Help Children Make Satisfactory Transitions, From the Theoretical Perspective and in Light of Other Transition Studies

1. In the family setting:
 - Stable and positive relations between the main stakeholders.
 - Understanding of the boundaries for action, freedom and independence.
 - Emotional security.
 - Creative play and learning.
 - Adequate communication.
 - Self-governance.
 - Parents/grandparents who support education.
 - Fathers and mothers who have a common and clear idea of development goals.
 - Parents' commitment and ability to respond.
 - Positive child-rearing.
 - The mother's education level is important but not determinant.
2. In the school setting:
 - Positive relationship of teachers and education agents.
 - The role of language and culture.

- A curriculum that is pertinent, diversified and inclusive.
- Recognition of the child's potential.
- Processes oriented towards strengthening identity and subjectivity.

Transitions must be oriented towards developing the child's human potential through teaching and cultural practices that will put communities' own knowledge into dialogue with knowledge accumulated in other cultures, including scientific knowledge.

A successful transition requires two fundamental conditions:

- The internal conditions that children have been able to construct (with family support).
- The conditions for quality of the education service: friendly and respectful of the child; the child's active role in his or her learning; families involvement in curriculum development; cultural relevance, emotional and cognitive interactions of quality and flexibility.

In general, we may say that changes must not be left to chance: actions of both a vertical and a horizontal nature must be deliberately planned and carried out. The planning of articulations must take into account children's level of development in various fields.

1.5.4. Reconstructing the Approach to Transitions as an Opportunity and not a Disadvantage

- 1 The change that transitions imply can be an opportunity for new learning.
- 2 These are moments for constructing and developing self-awareness.
- 3 They relate to the process of constituting children's subjectivity and identity through socialization.
- 4 They are opportunities to promote construction of normative limits in the child.
- 5 They are opportunities for implementing children's capacity for learning to learn, within a broad framework of human development principles.
- 6 They allow individual characteristics to flourish, establishing qualitative differences in the way each child deals with critical moments of change.
- 7 They are opportunities for displaying the child's capacity for emotional self-governance in the face of uncertainty.
- 8 They are moments of articulation: the schools involved (the recipient and the "giver"), family, children, specific interventions inherent in transition.

1.5.5. What is Needed to Correct the Current Situation

Reverting the situation will require:

- 1 Political will to expand the coverage of early childhood education.
- 2 Continuity and articulation in the system while stressing equity and quality in the services offered.
- 3 Encouraging government investment in early childhood education.
- 4 Comprehensive interventions linking the family, the school and community.

- 5 Strengthening strategies to empower families in the support they can provide to the transition process experienced by the preschooler upon entering the basic education system, especially in the indigenous world.
- 6 Better preparation for teachers, in terms of contents and methodological strategies, allowing them to sequence learning and articulate classes, cycles and educational levels, in order to offer children better support in building their self-identities, and extending these formative effects to the families.
- 7 Participation by organized civil society, which must exercise leadership in incorporating early childhood problems in rural and border areas into the agenda of local governments, and assuring the necessary coordination to achieve complementarity and optimize the use of available resources.
- 8 Education programs need to be made more attractive and child-friendly.
- 9 Recognition that the problems of at-risk children are not confined to the private sphere (the family) but are becoming a national problem that must engage us all.

Part B

2. Methodological Aspects of the Case Studies

2.1. Analysis Units and Sample

1. The analysis units are children experiencing the transition processes from the family to preschool or daycare, from there to primary school, or from the home to primary school, and relating them to significant players, scenarios and socio-educational processes.
2. The suggestion was to work with a sample selected on the basis of criteria such as the following: children with their family, community, caregiver or teacher, considered in the context of a positive experience (where statistics show lower dropout and repetition rates and better performance).

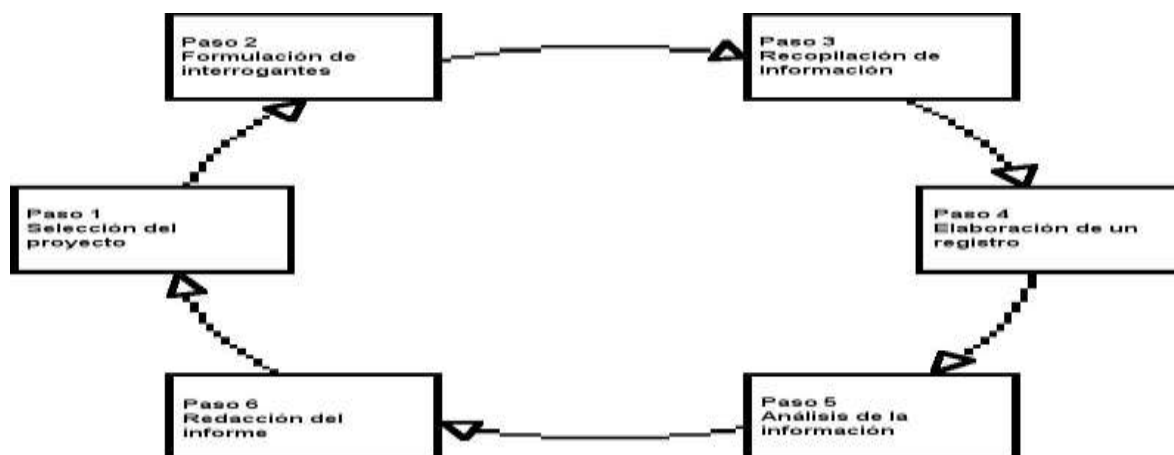
Age groups:

- Birth to three years (0 to 3 years, 11 months).
- Four to five years (4 to 5 years, 11 months).
- Six to eight years (6 to 8 years).

2.2. Methodological Approach

As this study was intended to produce a comprehensive understanding, we opted to work with an interpretive focus, understood as "an approximation to scientific knowledge within a qualitative paradigm, which constitutes itself in the experience of the researcher and which, starting with the notion that reality is a phenomenon of inter-subjective human construction, assumes it as multiple and simultaneous." In this context we formulated the initial questions.

The Cyclical Pattern of Qualitative Research



2.3. Questions

1. What are the characteristics of the local context?
2. How do children, their families and communities experience the transition process?

2.4. Techniques:

1. Qualitative observation of events:
 - Within the home: before leaving for school.
 - Upon arrival at school.
 - Within the school.
 - Within the home: upon return from school.
2. In-depth interviews:
 - With children.
 - With fathers and mothers.
 - With other family members.
 - With community leaders.
3. Projection techniques: sketches, skits, dramatizations
 - It was agreed that observations would consider the record of language, actions and gestures, and that the interviews would consider language and gestures as well. Tape recordings, photographic records and short videos were used, and the results of each day's observations and interviews were transcribed.
 - The final report on the case study was to contain texts and images, analysis of the case, conclusions and lessons learned.
 - This report was to be roughly 40 pages in length, covering only the essential aspects. The remaining information would be included in annexes.

2.5. Records Compiled

1. Observations: language, actions, gestures.
2. Interviews: language and gestures
3. Using tape recordings, photographs and short videos.

4. Textual transcriptions of each day's observations are interviews.

2.6. Analysis

1. After each day of observation or interview.
2. Formulation of new questions for more targeted observation and interviews, at the researchers' discretion.
3. New interviews and observations, as needed.
4. This phase ends at the saturation point.

2.7. Outline of the Reports

Four chapters:

- 1. Background: the context for each selected group;**
- 2. Transitions from birth to age eight, as seen by the various stakeholders;**
- 3. Conclusions; and**
- 4. Lessons learned from and for education policy.**

Chapter 1: Background

1. Brief history of the locality.
2. Population size, broken down by sex, age and ethnic origin.
3. Language or dialect spoken and number of speakers (absolute and percentage).
4. Principal institutions and organizations in the sector, their purpose, and the proportion of the population participating in them.
5. Main sources of income in the sector.
6. Principal rites and beliefs.
7. Other items as necessary for better understanding of the context.

Chapter 2: Transitions from Birth to Age Eight, as Seen by the Various Stakeholders

1. The meaning of preschool
2. The meaning of school
3. Positive aspects of preschool
4. Negative aspects of preschool
5. Positive aspects of the school
6. Negative aspects of the school
7. Expectations about preschool
8. Expectations about the school
9. All of these issues, viewed from the perspective of transition

Chapter 3: Conclusions

Chapter 4: Lessons Learned From and For Education Policy

2.8. Communities in which the Case Studies were Conducted, by Country:

1. Chile: Locality of Mahuidache, 80% indigenous Mapuche.
2. Colombia: Embera Chamí rural-indigenous community.
3. Peru: Native Community of Teoría, of the Ashaninka ethnic group.
4. Venezuela: Añú Ethnic Group, located in the Laguna de Sinamaica.

Chapter II. COLOMBIA CASE STUDY
THE EMBERA CHAMÍ RURAL-INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY

Report presented by:

Team Colombia

*National Coordinator
Principal Researcher
Sara Victoria Alvarado*

*Research Assistant
Martha Suárez J.*

*Center for Advanced Studies in Childhood and Youth
Doctorate in Social Sciences, Childhood and Youth
CINDE – University of Manizales Alliance*

Introduction. 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study. 1.1. The Concept of Human Development. 1.2. Approximations of the Educational Transitions Concept. 2. Characteristics of the Setting. 2.1. Brief History of the Locality: Municipality of Riosucio, Embera Chamí Community, Cañamomo Lomaprieta Indigenous Reservation. 2.2. Population Breakdown by Sex, Age and Ethnic Origin. 2.3. Language and Percentage of Speakers. 2.4. Existing Institutions and Organizations. 2.5. Principal Sources of Income. 2.6. Cosmogony, Cosmology, Beliefs and Traditions. 3. Educational Transition Processes: Players, Scenarios and Practices. 3.1. Players. 3.1.1. Families and Children. 3.1.1.1. The Nuclear Family. 3.1.1.2. Family Involvement in the Transition Process. 3.1.1.3. How do Embera Chamí Children Experience Transitions? 3.1.2. Education Agents. 3.2. Scenarios. 3.2.1. The Family Home. 3.2.2. The School. 3.2.3. Preschool. 3.2.4. The First Grade of Primary School. 3.3. Practices. 3.3.1. Specific Actions. 3.3.2. Vertical and Horizontal Articulations. 4. Conclusions From the Study. 5. Lessons Learned From and For Education Policy. Bibliography.

Educational Transitions, an Opportunity for the Integral Development of Indigenous Children in Colombia

"We are sowing options for a worthwhile life through the arts and traditions of our community; dances, music and songs compose the harmony of daily life; the water in our cascades and the wind in the trees inspire flutes, strings, maracas and drums; creative hands give shape to nature: wood, ceramic figurines and baskets express our voices and portray the art of our people; we fill people with motives for dreaming, thinking, loving, sowing and constructing their life plan collectively."¹

Introduction

The Colombian research team decided to conduct its case study among children of the Embera Chamí rural indigenous community, located in the municipality of Riosucio, Department of Caldas, Colombia. The central theme is the educational transitions that children make between the home and preschool, and between preschool and basic primary school. We investigate actions that promote successful transitions—from the home to preschool and from preschool to the first year of basic education—and the critical points that occur in the process of transition between the family and school.

The study offers an analysis from the perspective of children's integral human development. The team examined transitions on the basis of three main categories—players, scenarios and practices—on the basis of which we explored the interests and issues facing indigenous children in their educational transition, as seen by the children themselves, their families, their teachers, school principals and other institutional agents.

With these players we discussed daily practices that promote the transition process and reviewed the articulations that arise in the relations between the school, family and community, and the relations established between initial education, preschool and primary school.

1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

1.1. The Concept of Human Development

A theoretical exploration of the educational transitions that children make is intimately linked to concepts of human development from an evolutionary perspective, or from the analysis of needs, which led us to look closely at the importance of linking the concept of integral human development of children as a point of departure for this study. Thus, as a framework, we propose a perspective that Alvarado (2008) calls "alternative," and which refers to human development as "*a process of constituting children's subjectivity and identity through socialization.*"²

This approach relies on various contributions, in which four perspectives that we consider essential for addressing the issue of children's transitions are highlighted. First is the sociological perspective of Burger and Luckman (1983, 1995), cited by Alvarado (2008) on the social construction of

¹ Taborda, W. (2007). Informe de Gestión año 2007. Riosucio y Supía, Caldas, una nueva forma de gobernabilidad. Resguardo indígena Cañamomo Lomaprieta. Manizales: Gráficas Tizán

² Alvarado, S. V. (2008). Socialización política de los niños y las niñas en edad preescolar, formación de valores y procesos de participación infantil. Manizales: CINDE- Universidad de Manizales

reality, which seeks to understand how children are socially “*self-produced*” while at the same time creating and constantly re-signifying the symbolic frameworks of their culture and the world of social relations and their normative expression, for which they will configure their particular ways of being with their own meanings (subjectivity), and their shared ways of acting in the context of a given culture (identity), through the processes of individuation and socialization. With this perspective we can read the various situations through which Embera Chamí children pass, in the course of their own educational transitions.

Second, for an analysis of the emotional relations that surround and give effect to children's transitions, we shall consider the perspective outlined by Alvarado (2008) on critical psychoanalysis, in collaboration with Loranger (1985), on inter-subjectivity and the processes of compulsive relationship—always conflictive between persons—in which individual interests and affective needs come into play for constituting the human being. This can only be resolved intersubjectively in relationship with the other person, where *the principal relationship is that forged early on between mother and child (or between the child and the primary relational object), in which the foundations of the emotional possibility of incorporating the other lie.*

Third, we take up the political philosophy viewpoint of Agnes Heller (1993) on everyday life and the worlds that constitute it, in which she proposes that the processes of constituting humanity and learning to create conditions for conforming “us,” occur in the context of everyday life, and activities shared on a day-to-day such as material production (physical world), the social relations that we establish to that end (social world), and the symbolic frameworks through which we communicate (symbolic world).³ This perspective gives meaning to our observations of the day-to-day lives of children at home and at school.

Finally, as Alvarado (2008) proposes, it is important to take into account the contributions of Sen (2000) from the economic viewpoint, with his theory of entitlements, opportunities and capabilities, which allows us to understand that recognizing children's rights (entitlements) is not enough if we fail to simultaneously strengthen their human potential to act in the world (capabilities) and to create the conditions for exercising their rights and developing their potential (opportunities).

From this perspective, we can take a multidimensional view of children as active subjects in their own life process, in which they are regarded not in terms of their level of maturity, *nor as a cipher or in terms of needs, but as something more comprehensive that includes, in addition to studying the individual and social processes of constituting children's subjectivity and identity in each of their dimensions of development, a study of the economic, cultural, social and political contexts in which their existence is made viable* (Alvarado 2008).

In this sense, we believe that transition processes cannot be divorced from the multiple dimensions of child development. Consequently, educational environments, agents and their practices, must respond to the potentials for constructing the child's subjectivity that are present in children in order to appreciate them in their broad and divergent dimensions and enable the construction of different and empowering identities as distinct from others. In this sense, transitions constitute challenges for children, which they will have to address in the midst of the conflict posed by the many changes they are called to make as an inherent condition of the transformations of the human being during the course of his or her life. It is in this context that we shall review the findings from this study.

1.2. Approximations of the Educational Transitions Concept

³ Taken from Alvarado (2008).

For analyzing the situations encountered in the case study, we begin with the concept of transitions adopted by the project team, in which we define transitions as “*critical moments of change that children experience in moving from one environment to another, opening opportunities for their human development and their learning for life and school.*”

The transitions that we shall be examining in this document relate to the processes that children experience in moving between the home and education institutions, and between the different levels of education. Our intention is to conduct an analysis informed by a vision of integral human development where the child is seen as a subject with the autonomy to participate in his or her own transitional processes. We shall focus our analysis on the players, scenarios and practices that mark those changes as milestones in the personal history of indigenous children of the Embera Chimí ethnic group living in the rural area of the municipality of Riosucio. This will require some precise definitions with respect to families and the community, so as better to understand the factors that can facilitate the process.

2. Characteristics of the Setting

2.1. Brief History of the Locality: Municipality of Riosucio, Embera Chamí Community, Cañamomo Lomaprieta Indigenous Reservation

The history of Riosucio as a municipality is related closely with the occupation of these lands by the Spanish conquistadors and the use of indigenous and black people as slaves in the local gold mines. At the beginning of the 16th century, the indigenous nation of the Ansermas inhabited the region between the summits of the Western Cordillera and the River Cauca, from the southwest of Antioquia to the northern portion of the current Department of Valle. They constituted various tribes, with the heaviest population concentration in what is now the western portion of Viejo Caldas.

The territory of the current municipality of Riosucio was inhabited by various Ansermas tribes. One of them, the Pirsá, occupied the Valley of the Imurrá or Rio Sucio; it seems that three other tribes extended their domain through the valley of the Oro and the Aurría or Etancias rivers, and one of them to the Ipá Valley; while the Zopía tribe appears to have extended its sway from the current municipality of Supía to the region of the Aguas Claras River (now San Lorenzo).

The main tribes living in the region were the Armas, Paucaras, Pijaos, Ansermas, Quinchías, Chamíes and Quimbayas. In colonial times black slaves were brought to the mining areas of Marmita, Supía, Arma and Victoria; gold deposits were exploited in the 16th and 17th centuries by the Spaniards using indigenous and black labor, the origin of these populations in the area. The 19th century saw the beginnings of colonization from Antioquia, Tolima and Cauca.

2.2. Population Breakdown by Sex, Age and Ethnic Origin

The population of the municipality of Riosucio, according to the 2005 census, is 54,537 inhabitants: 51% are female and 49% male. Sixty-two percent of the population is rural, and 38% urban. Official statistics provide no data on the indigenous population, although it accounts for a major portion of the rural total.

According to the Regional Indigenous Council of Caldas (CRIDEC) the Department of Caldas has more than 63,000 indigenous residents, organized in indigenous villages with the village council (*cabildo*) as the maximum authority in their territory.

The greatest concentration of indigenous peoples is found in the municipality of Riosucio, where there are four legally constituted indigenous reservations: those of Nuestra Señora Candelaria de la Montaña and Cañamomo Lomapieta (Riosucio, Supía) were established in colonial times with a royal seal delivered by the Spanish crown in 1627, while the reservations of San Lorenzo and Escopetera Pirza were established only recently.

The indigenous population in the Department of Caldas currently comprises:⁴

Municipality	Indigenous Community	N° of residents
Riosucio		
Montaña	1.Resguardo Indígena (Indigenous Reservation) Nuestra Señora Candelaria de La	17,141
	2.Resguardo Indígena Cañamomo Lomapieta	21,701
	3. Resguardo Indígena San Lorenzo	11,112
	4. Resguardo Indígena Escopetera Pirza	7,941
Belalcázar	5.Resguardo Indígena Totumal	1,403
Risaralda	6.Resguardo Indígena La Albania	249
Supía	7.Comunidad Indígena Cauromá	1,400
	8.Comunidad Indígena La Trina	1,951
Filadelfia	9.Comunidad Indígena La Soledad	160
Anserma	10.Comunidad Indígena Ansea	177
Marmato	11.Comunidad Indígena Cartama	2,920
Neira	12.Comunidad Indígena Damasco	417
Total	Residents	66,572

Source: CRIDEC

The Cañamomo Lomapieta reservation

The reservation is located in the foothills of the Western Cordillera, along the western flanks of the Cauca River Valley, an area now known as "upper west" of the Department of Caldas. The community has a population of around 21,000, according to a census conducted by the *cabildo* in 2007, and covers 12,000 ha. The climate is temperate in the higher areas and hot in the valleys, with the temperature ranging between 14° and 28°C. The area is linked by road to the capitals of Manizales, Pereira and Medellín by the Pan American and *Troncal de Occidente* (Western Trunk) Highways.

The reservation comprises 32 communities distributed between the municipalities of Riosucio and Supía. The following communities are located in Riosucio: Tumbabarreto, La Unión, Sipirra, Miraflores, Pulgarín, Amolador, Cañamomo, Jagual, Tabuyo, El Rodeo, La Tolda, La Rueda, Aguacatal, San Juan, Quiebralomo, El Palal, Panesso, Portachuelo, Planadas and Iberia, the administrative center of the reservation.

Ethnic origins

⁴ Consejo Regional Indígena de Caldas, CRIDEC

The Embera are one of the largest ethnic groups in Colombia, belonging to the Karibe language group, which in turn is part of the Chocó linguistic family. They are located in western Colombia and eastern Panama, and number approximately 60,000 persons, embracing various distinctions of culture and bloodline. Those living in the upper Sinú and the upper San Jorge, Department of Córdoba and Urabá in Colombia are called the Emberá Katío; the name Embera Chamí applies to those living in the western and central cordilleras of the Colombian Andes in the departments of Antioquia, Caldas, Risaralda, Quindío and Valle; those living in the valleys of the Río Baudó and the lower San Juan, municipalities of Istmina, Alto Baudó and Pizarro, the Río Curiche, municipality of Juradó in the Chocó (Colombia) and in the Comarca Emberá-Wounaan in Darién (Panama) are known as the Chocoes or simply Emberá, and those of the Pacific Coast in the departments of Valle, Cauca and Nariño in Colombia are called Eperara Siapidara or Epená.

The case study involved families of the Chamí culture, who share the pre-Hispanic and colonial history of the Embera, marked by their continued resistance to the incursions of the conquistadors until the 17th century. In the course of settling their current territory they have been in permanent contact with mestizo and Afro-Colombian populations with whom they share their territory, as well as with other players of the majority society, who have shaped the social and economic dynamics of these settlements.

The Chamí, like the other Embera, have always exhibited a scattered population pattern. They live in various Andean communities, in Antioquia, Caldas, Risaralda, Quindio and Valle del Cauca.

In recent decades they have seen a considerable shrinking of their territories with expansion of the farming frontier and the deterioration of their soils. These phenomena have prompted changes in their pattern of residence and their use of the environment.

It is important to understand that the families in the study, while they belong to the Embera Chamí ethnic group, have intermingled culturally with Afro Colombian and *campesino* communities, as a result of constant displacements, expropriation and internal migrations, and it would therefore be more accurate to refer to them as rural-indigenous communities. In the Cañamomo Lomapieta reservation, the communities have lost their original language and some of their traditions.

On this point, the education secretary of Riosucio pointed to difficulties in relating with these communities: *"from my viewpoint these are communities that are reconstructing themselves... as I see it, they were indigenous communities that at a point in time came to be like campesino communities and then reorganized themselves as indigenous, so it is not easy to understand the situation, because they have lost many of their customs and they are trying to retrieve them... being in a community that has never lost its customs is not the same thing as being in a community that lost them and is trying to retrieve them"* (Interview with the Secretary of Education, Riosucio, 2009).

This situation puts the community in a much weaker position than that of indigenous communities that still speak the language, and of rural *campesino* communities, in terms of recognizing their rights and having real access to government services.

2.3. Language and Percentage of Speakers

Of the 65 languages spoken today in Colombia, the Wayú, Paez and Embera tongues have more than 50,000 speakers. The Chamí or Embera-Chamí are an indigenous ethnic group speaking a dialect of the Embera language. Chamí is a dialect of the Chocó linguistic family, spoken by some 3,000 people

living in the Western Cordillera of Colombia in the departments of Risaralda, Eastern Valle, Western Caldas and Southern Antioquia.⁵

Chamí means "mountain range" and *Embera* means "people:" the Chamí, then, are the people of the mountain range, as opposed to the Embera who live in the forests of the Pacific coastal plain, and the Embera-Katio in the valleys of the Urubá and upper Sinú. Their language, together with that of the Wounaan, belongs to the Chocó language family, which some experts group into a macro-family with the Caribbean languages.⁶

Because of the pressures that the territory and its indigenous community have historically suffered since the conquest, and the resulting population migrations and dispersal, there are no speakers of the Embera language in the Cañamomo Lomapieta reservation. However, the local government is conducting a social and linguistic study to retrieve the language, recognizing this as an issue of great importance for current and future generations.

The education models imposed on indigenous people may also be cited as a determining factor in the loss of their language. According to Bañol (2008), *"between 1900 and 1960 indigenous education was conducted under church sponsorship or in government schools and followed a curriculum that ignored ethnic culture and in most cases prohibited use of the indigenous language (Cric 1987, page 9). With the rules and guidelines contained in the concordat signed between the Colombian government and the Holy See in 1887, which remained in force until after the middle of the 20th century, the Catholic Church became a central element of the social order and a means for extending civilization and nationality to its former vassals, the 'savages' of the jungles and the Indians of the mountains" (Jimeno and Triana, 1985, page 31).*⁷

The authorities responsible for education in the reservation and some of the teachers have been working for several years to retrieve the language. To learn it they hold monthly meetings with members of other reservations who still use the native tongue. As one teacher, Jeanette Motato, put it, *"the mother tongue is completely lost, but education is offering ways of learning and appropriating the language, and we teachers have been studying it for five years"* (interview with teacher Jeanette Motato, January 2009).

This is not an easy process, however, for it involves learning a new language with special phonetic features linked to a specific worldview. Yet despite these complications, the teachers have thrown themselves wholeheartedly into the task, devoting their spare time to configuring a suitable curriculum with the children and their families. *"What we have been able to do with children has been a beautiful process, it is difficult because when you're not born with the language it's like trying to learn English, you repeat it but you don't really know what it means—people who are born with the mother tongue have a symbology and they can relate to those customs, the language is used for communication and not only for verbal communication but also in the spiritual realm ... we have been trying for the last five years, although during those five years we have had only one or two days a month to study—as you know, this has to be done outside the school day, taking away from the teacher's own free time"* (interview with teacher Jeanette Motato, January 2009).

2.4. Existing Institutions and Organizations

⁵ Ministerio de Gobierno, Sistemas fonológicos de idiomas colombianos.

⁶ Embera is an agglutinative and ergative language that favors the passive verb form.

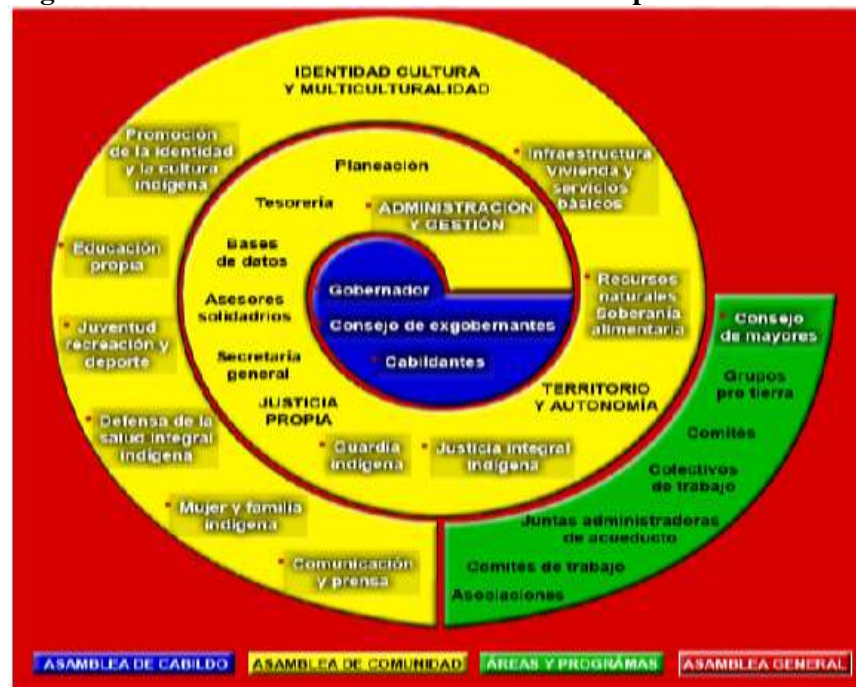
⁷ Bañol, J. P. (2008). Educación propia, un camino de resistencia y de identidad cultural del pueblo Embera Chamí del departamento de Caldas, Riosucio, Colombia. Informe del Consejo Regional Indígena de Caldas, CRIDEC

In the traditional Embera communities, social organization is based on the family relationship: it comprises the father and mother, their children and respective families. Authority is exercised by the head of the family, normally an elder. The political organization is based on the *cabildo*, an institution that, while essential to the community's outside relations, has not displaced the power of the traditional authorities in establishing forms of social control. As with other Embera groups, the Jaibaná, male or female, has a very important role in the magic-religious life of the group.

Organizations have their roots in the indigenous reservations, which are "the collective property of the indigenous communities for whom they are constituted and, pursuant to articles 63 and 329 of the political Constitution, they are inalienable, imprescriptible and nonseizable. The reservations are a special legal and social-political institution consisting of one or more indigenous communities which, with collective ownership title and enjoying the guarantees of private property, possess their territory and govern that territory and its internal life through an autonomous organization protected by indigenous jurisdiction and its own normative system" (Ministry of Agriculture, 1995).⁸

The Chamí communities of the department of Caldas are organized around the regional indigenous Council of Caldas (CRIDEC) with mayors and local councils (*cabildos*).

Organizational Structure of the Cañamomo Lomaprieta Reservation⁹



The reservation has drawn up a proposal for social and community governance with an integral, dynamic, autonomous, democratic and participatory structure for implementing policies. This spiral structure, consistent with indigenous thinking, provides for a two-way flow, i.e. from the Council to the community and from the community to the Council, and reflects both the State and program's visions, as well as their specific cultural and historic features.

⁸ Salazar, F., Sarmiento, A. & Murcia, U. (2008). Áreas protegidas, resguardos indígenas y zonas de reserva forestal de la ley 2ª de 1959 de Colombia. Online Retrieved in January 2009 from:

http://www.raisg.socioambiental.org/files/Amazonia_Colombiana.pdf

⁹ Source: Cañamomo Lomaprieta reservation webpage

According to the *cabildo*, this proposal seeks "to facilitate the development of the fundamentals, principles and policies of the Life Plan, the development of a new approach to governance that will guarantee an efficient and effective response in the inter-relationship with the State and other external bodies, guarantee autonomous and legitimate exercise of authority, with a view to breaking with a mental structure of a sector of the community that has seen the organization and the *cabildo* as an extension of the State and not as a projection of its life, to obtain a vision of territorial administration, to democratize the organizational process, and to guarantee empowerment of the community." ¹⁰

2.5. Principal Sources of Income

The principal economic activities are itinerant slash-and-mulch farming (in which the vegetation is not burned, but rather left in the field as mulch to decompose before planting) and fishing. Individuals also engage in hunting and gathering.

The Embera classify themselves according to their living conditions, as the Dóbida (living along river banks); the Pusábida (inhabitants of Pacific coastal lands); and in the Chamí (the Cordillera), the Oíbida (of the Andean woodlands) and the Eyábida (of deforested areas).

As colonization destroyed the forests they once inhabited, various Chamí communities have become sedentary, growing seasonal or perennial crops on established family plots. Some Chamí have even become day laborers, as their lands were taken over by coffee plantations from which they were subsequently evicted as international coffee prices fell.

Currently, the main sources of income are subsistence crops, sugarcane and coffee, fodder for livestock, and the production of *panela* (brown sugarloaf).

2.6. Cosmogony, Cosmology, Beliefs and Traditions

Cosmogony and cosmology:

It is important to appreciate the cosmology of the Cañamomo Lomaprieta reservation community in order to understand its principal rituals and beliefs. According to the *cabildo*, cosmogony is understood as "the set of mythical, religious, philosophical and scientific theories about the origin of the world, starting from an earthly, cultural and spiritual beginning with which we have defined ourselves from time immemorial. Thus we identify ourselves with the jaguar and the eagle, for they are visionary spirits, the first terrestrial and the second air-borne; thus, taking the meaning of our roots we always speak of a collective territory where for us every stone, every tree, every animal, every spring, every hill concentrates the meaning of healing through protective spirits, and hence we define our sacred sites as a source of life for guaranteeing our survival as an indigenous people." ¹¹

As for cosmology, "this is our way of seeing the world, the way we project our own thinking through the different elements of nature, to envision each point of entry and exit of the spiritual meaning, and so the heavenly bodies—the sun, the moon, the stars and the constellations—are an essential part of our lives. ...These two aspects are essential for understanding the culture of our people, for understanding what identifies us as indigenous." ¹²

Beliefs and traditions:

¹⁰ www.resguardolomapieta.org

¹¹ Idem.

¹² Idem.

An important aspect of Embera life is its relationship to the *jai* spirits through the medium of the *jaibaná*, non-hereditary shamans who learn from more experienced masters about the magical and spiritual power that regulates life, health, subsistence and nature. They conceive three forms of *jai* or spirit: water spirits, Dojura, together with the Wandra, the mothers of animals and plants that live in the headwaters of the rivers; the Antumiá of the deep jungle; and those of jungle animals that are transformations of dead human souls.

The dealings of the *jaibaná* with the spirits guarantee the fundamental activities of society and the continuity of natural cycles, establishing at the same time the territorial dimension of communities. These dealings have a cosmological nature in that communication and agreements with the spirits regulate exchanges between the different superimposed levels of the universe.

Dachizeze, the father of the upper world, created Tutruicá in the lower world and Caragabí in this world. The story goes that Caragabí was able to make humans only by asking Tutruicá for mud and was then able to breathe movement into humans because he knew how to overcome the heaviness of the earth. Corn and *chontaduro* (palm fruits) were brought down from a higher realm. Without the exchange of materials and knowledge between worlds, society and nature could not continue. Caragabí was able to uproot the Jenené tree: from its root sprang the sea, and from its branches the rivers. Over those rivers lies a great serpent, Jepá, by which one can travel between the levels of the world, as happens in the headwaters of the rivers, where beings from the upper and lower worlds cross paths. The game animals whose mothers are in the headwaters of the rivers are people from below visualized as animals and the souls of dead humans can be food for the people from below: for example, when a servant bites a person this means that the people from below have hunted him.

The *jaibaná* carry on the work of Caragabí and other legendary heroes, as mediums capable of dealing at the cosmic level and perpetuating the exchanges that characterize life, which is both nature and society.

Within the Cañamomo Lomaprieta reservation, the *jaibaná* has been replaced by the traditional healer, who performs energy-balancing rituals and is a mythical, ritual and curative figure who provides spiritual guidance to the community. In contrast to the *jaibaná*, this is a hereditary position, but is in fact driven by a traditional health school. The *cabildo* education office is working to formulate an education program that incorporates this knowledge into day-to-day school life.

The community follows the phases of the moon for certain important aspects such as health. Timber must only be cut in the early morning hours when the moon is in the last quarter, and sowing and harvesting are also governed by the lunar calendar.

The community's main festivals revolve around sugar cane: in February comes the *Carnaval del Guarapo*,¹³ and in May the *Fiesta de la Panela*.¹⁴ Other festivities hark back to ancient traditions, such as the *Fiesta de la Olla* ("Feast of Pots"), which celebrates the potter's craft. There is one very interesting festival highlighting intercultural relations, the *Carnaval Negroíde* hosted jointly with the Afro community, the central objective of which is to restore the traditions that these two communities shared back in the days when the mines were worked by slaves. The Afro community has welcomed the organization proposed by the indigenous *cabildo*.

¹³ *Guarapo* is a fermented beverage made from sugarcane.

¹⁴ "Brown sugarloaf", one of the region's main products.

3. Educational Transition Processes: Players, Scenarios and Practices

3.1. Players

3.1.1. Families and Children

3.1.1.1. The Nuclear Family

While we do not have sufficient information to conceptualize the position of the family among the Embera Chamí, we believe we can describe some of its characteristics on the basis of a historical analysis of what the family has meant for these communities. The family was traditionally patrilocal, i.e. newlyweds would spend some time in the father's home until they could find their own dwelling, and if widowed or separated the son or daughter-in-law would go to live in the father's house. The father would also take the most important decisions relating to family lands and unions. The extended family still persists, with some degree of endogamy.

According to the anthropologist Luis Guillermo Vasco, the characteristics of the Embera Chamí family have altered greatly: *"we may consider it to be an extended family in the process of decomposition,"*¹⁵ one that now reflects the nuclear family model promoted in the cities, marked by a breakdown of the traditional links of family care and protection in the community.

This viewpoint is consistent with what we found with the families participating in the study, among which we observed a tendency to establish monogamous relations with nuclear families, headed by a single woman, and sometimes involving indigenous-campesino couples. In families where the man is indigenous, the union tends to be somewhat more stable despite the economic constraints facing the family, as it is normal in the indigenous culture for the man to abandon the home. In unions between an indigenous woman and a man from outside the community, the woman is more likely to be left alone to look after the children, playing the role of household head, in very precarious economic and social circumstances. Although the community accepts the notion of the unmarried mother, the individual family's idiosyncrasies will determine whether women are protected and supported by their relatives or cast out of the community.

Of the five families in the study, two consisted of father and mother, and three households were headed by a single mother. In these latter households the mother was obliged to work and had to rely on the ICBF kindergarten¹⁶ for daycare, regardless of the age of the children. Moreover, she had no opportunity to participate in their children's transition and adaptation. In this case the decision to place the child in kindergarten was dictated by the mother's needs.

Mothers living with a partner can keep their children at home for longer and place them in the kindergarten when they *"need to be with other children and learn other things"* (interview with Diana Vargas, one of the mothers in the study, January 2009). In this case, the decision to place the child in kindergarten reflects the needs of the child, and the mothers are generally tolerant and patient with their children because *"we don't really have to leave them there,"* and the mothers have time to spend in the kindergarten while the children become accustomed to the new setting proposed for their integral development.

¹⁵ Vasco, G. (2007). Los Embera Chamí del departamento de Caldas. Online. Retrieved 15 February 2009 from: <http://www.luguiva.net/articulos/detalle.aspx?id=60>

¹⁶ ICBF: Instituto Colombiano de Bienestar Familiar, a government agency responsible for delivering family services, which has a network of kindergartens and nursery schools throughout the country.

Given this situation, we might say that female household headship exacerbates poverty in indigenous families and that on the other hand this situation tends to make gender relations more dynamic: when women leave the home and the community to find work they must play a more proactive social role as the family head. This is not a blanket statement to the effect that households headed by women are poor or incapable of addressing the challenges of transitions, but merely an observation that such families are more vulnerable and dependent on social and community attitudes.

On this point we may quote Chant (2003),¹⁷ who maintains that the *"feminization of poverty" is due not so much to the fact that most women are poor but rather to the fact that gender relations within society lead to this result.* Kabeer (2003)¹⁸ adds to this with the observation that *the structure of poverty goes beyond the market (procurement of goods and services); there are intangible forms of poverty, such as social isolation, vulnerability, insecurity and relationships of dependency and subordination in meeting basic needs, which may be seen as mechanisms through which poverty is reproduced.*

We can relate this analysis clearly to the transitions experienced by children from female-headed indigenous households, where the nucleus is reduced and children's transitions are postponed by more pressing and immediate economic needs. However, the study shows that, depending on the female household headship context, single women can win greater empowerment when they are supported by their families and the community, opening broader opportunities for their children than they would otherwise have.

In economic terms, the families participating in the study are living in fairly straightened circumstances. The men farm their own plot or hire themselves out as day laborers to other farmers; the women are housewives or work as domestic servants in other people's homes. It is common that, if there are many children, not all will be able to go to school or kindergarten. One of the families does not have the meager equivalent of US\$5.40 a month needed to send their three-year-old twins to kindergarten, although they consider this to be an excellent experience for the children—a third child, who is very bright, went to kindergarten and had no problem adapting to preschool.

Fathers and mothers

The fathers are indigenous Embera Chamí; they are farm workers, shy, and do not talk much. They have very little education, and none finished primary school. In general they take little part in their children's education activities, and devote most of their energy to working to earn income for their families. They work on the family plot, they hire themselves out as day laborers to other farmers, and at coffee harvest time they migrate to the coffee belt to find work as harvesters: this is the best time of year in terms of income.

For the children the support they receive from their fathers is very important. Even if the fathers are not directly involved in the children's day-to-day school life, they contribute to their children's transitions. The mothers form the bridge between the fathers, the teachers and the children: *"the father and the teacher talk to each other and when the kids do well they are rewarded with some treat or being taken to someplace they like where they can see their friends..."* (interview with a mother in the study, 2008).

¹⁷ Chant, S. (2003). *New contributions to the analysis of poverty: methodological and conceptual challenges to understanding poverty from a gender perspective*. United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Women and Development Unit. Published by United Nations Publications, New York, 2003. ISBN 9213222742, 9789213222744, 74 pages.

¹⁸ Kabeer, N. (2003). *Gender mainstreaming in poverty eradication and the millennium development goals*. Canadian International Development Agency, International Development Research Centre (Canada, Commonwealth Secretariat). Published by IDRC, Ottawa. Mexico, D. F.: Plaza y Valdés S. A. de C. V. 2006. 264 pages.

Jonathan, one of the children, is very proud of his “daddy,” but his father glances only quickly at the drawings the boy proudly holds up (study observation, 2008).

According to the teachers, some fathers are not interested in having their children go to school, thinking that they will just waste their time at play. *"What happens is that in the countryside children are accustomed to working, and fathers are very skeptical about their children and school. If the child goes to school he won't come to work. I have even met students who left school and went to work"* (Teacher interview, 2007).

Another aspect that positively impacts the transition process and the support that fathers can give their children has to do with the father's own level of schooling. The teachers consider this a fundamental factor for children to succeed at school, and yet it is sorely lacking in the community. As one teacher put it, *"a real problem at this time is that fathers have so little education, they're virtually illiterate, they can't even sign their name ... so they don't see the importance of having their growing son acquire knowledge."* (Interview with Aldemar, primary school teaching coordinator, 2008).

The mothers are indigenous women between the ages of 25 and 35, with varying degrees of education: the older women are illiterate and some of the others have not completed primary school, but there are a few who have a high school diploma. They all attach importance to study: some complained that their education had been frustrated, while others wanted to study further. *"I never went beyond primary school because my mother had no money. I had to go to work when I was eight; I started night school but it was very tough"* (Interview with Luz Elena, mother, 2008).

Two of the female household heads completed high school and are working. There is a clear relationship between the mothers' education levels, their role as workers, and their openness to their children's education. The more educated mothers have confidence in the kindergarten and feel it important for the children to go there to play and learn. They also recognize their children's potential and needs: *"the process is very good because most of the mothers are working, this is a place where we can leave the kids and go about our work secure in the knowledge that they will be looked after and fed and that they will learn. My daughter already knows about colors, vowels, numbers, things we have no time to teach kids, and they also learn how to draw and play"* (Interview with Luz Elena, mother, 2008).

3.1.1.2. Family Involvement in the Transition Process

Generally speaking, among the families in the study the fathers take no active role in their children's transition; it is the mothers who mediate the relationship between the child and the school. The mothers prepare their children for school (wake them up, bathe them, clothe them and give them breakfast), and accompany them every day to kindergarten or school. They also maintain relations with the community mothers or teachers. It is they who take the kids to school and pick them up again. When the children have trouble adapting, some mothers will arrange with the teachers to stay behind a while with the children in the classroom, while they gain confidence. These arrangements occur spontaneously and depend on the educational vision and the willingness of the kindergarten headmistress or teacher.

Family involvement in supporting children in their transition process is informal and non-systematic. This does not mean that the parents have no ties to the school, but rather that the motivation for those ties is not focused on educational transitions, although there is a less explicit relationship.

The principal of the Portachuelo school said that *"the family plays a very important role in their children's success. We see kids who have no parental support, and they tend to be withdrawn, they go home and they are alone with their siblings, they are inhibited from learning, or when they have a question there is no one to answer it"* (Claudia Alejandra, principal, Portachuelo school, January 2009).

At the kindergarten, parents help out with logistic problems and fundraising events. *"Their participation consists in sending the kids to school on time, and paying close attention to what is going on in the school. For example, if we need to collect funds to buy a first aid kit or to arrange a party for the children, they will help out, and they also pay a fee to support the school (interview with the ICBF kindergarten teacher, February 2009).*

Some kindergartens in the community make arrangements for parents to participate in oversight, given cases of mistreatment and abuse by teachers and school staff in Colombia.

While activities that involve parents are not always directly related to the transition process, we believe that there are some that have a positive impact in this regard. *"The parents come to school and teach the children about farming; there is a school garden, there is a support group comprising parents and they demonstrate their solidarity and love for the institution, the children come to see that their parents are involved in the academic setting, there is a monthly meeting of the support group and they plan activities. For example, they will hold a food festival or cultural event"* (Interview with Portachuelo teacher, February 2009).

There are also activities in support of the indigenous tradition. Although most of the teachers in the reservation's schools are not indigenous, they value and promote ancestral knowledge and the community's ways of doing things through the local curriculum (*educación propia*, the community's "own education" program), which allows for major cultural interchanges. The principal of the Portachuelo school described *parents' meetings (of which there used to be eight a year, but the number has been reduced to four in line with Ministry of Education rules) as a place where "teachers meet and work with students and parents. At the beginning of the year there is a planning session; there is a topic and all the communities work on it. They have been teaching us how to make talcum, what medicinal plants are for, the phases of the moon..."* (Portachuelo principal, February 2009).

3.1.1.3. How do Embera Chamí Children Experience Transitions?

The children who make the best transitions have the support and affection of their family and their teachers, especially the mother, who is closest to them and is sensitive to them on a daily basis. Also important is the teacher's attitude, the mother and the father's attitude towards the child, their consideration of his or her needs, the child's level of participation in his or her own transition process: if the family and the school understand the child's tears, illness or apathy as signs, they will pay attention and establish dialogue with the child and accompany him or her fully through this stage.

a) Children Three Years and Under

In the Embera Chamí community, children remain with their families during the early years. The family prefers to keep them at home until they enter primary school at the age of six or seven, an aspect that has been changing with the entry of women into the labor force, the opening of ICBF kindergartens, and the preschool grade in the school.

It is important for all players to be aware of the transitional process that the child passes through and to be careful with disruptions to the daily routine. Changes at this age should be geared to enhancing well-being and emotional networks.

It is not only the child who feels the change. For some mothers it is difficult to leave little children in a place where they will be with children of other ages, and they are worried about the care the child will receive. This is why the attitude of the teacher and his or her relationship with the family is so

important. Some teachers allow the mothers to spend part of the school day with the children, to take them home early, or to skip a day in order to be with them. *"Good relations with the father of the family are essential for us community mothers."* (Portachuelo community mother, February 2009).

Although the community day care centers (*hogares comunitarios*) are legally allowed to accept children up to the age of five, the most common age of entry is two. Some working mothers, however, enroll their children before the age of one. The kindergarten teachers prefer to have children enrolled after the age of two: *"I have always accepted children from two years on, because younger kids take a lot of time and attention."* (Interview with an ICBF kindergarten teacher, January 2009).

When children enter kindergarten at such a young age it is seen as a natural place for the child's development. Mothers and kindergarten teachers assume that the child does not notice what is going on around him or her, and adaptation at this age is considered *"easier,"* on the grounds that the child has no awareness or cannot participate in this process independently. Pia Vogler, however, citing other authors, notes that *"research in the last decades has impressively confirmed that children from an early age are explorers with boundless curiosity and that they are judicious decision makers and social actors each with their own unique goals, interests and ways to communicate feelings and intentions"* (Doek, Krappmann & Lee, 2006, p. 37; taken from Vogler, 2007).

In this respect, and confirming the statement, we observed how one Embera girl less than three years old willingly took on a protective role in caring for younger children. Jonathan taught his little brother what he had learned and they all communicated independently with the kindergarten teacher. They joined the kindergarten mother in her work, proposing games and deciding what they wanted to do.

At this stage, transition processes are guided almost entirely by the mother and the teacher; there are no official guidelines to support this transition. These processes are shaped and developed in the day-to-day relationship between mother, child and teacher, where affection is the essential component for the children to make transitions where there is no emotional discontinuity, and where the child's participation can be promoted with simple but deliberate actions on the part of the family and the kindergarten. It is important, then, for early childhood education policy to include school transitions and to structure processes for educating and sensitizing fathers, mothers, caregivers and kindergarten teachers with a clear orientation to supporting successful educational transitions for children in indigenous cultures.

The mothers of children with successful transitions see the transition process as a short moment in the life of the children in which play has an important role. *"Karen has been in the kindergarten since she was two years old. It was hard for her to adapt during the first week: I took her there on Monday and on Wednesday she was already more at ease. During the first two days she cried a lot, but then she got used to the kindergarten and started to play"* (mother of a four-year-old girl, January 2009).

b) Children Ages Three to Five

Factors that promote successful transitions

For transitions to be successful at this age it is very important that the emotional bonds be firm, that the family have close relations with the kindergarten, that the activities offered be challenging, and that the premises be agreeable and attuned to the children's culture.

"My son (Camilo) is a person who adapts very readily to children and for him it was not hard; he cried for two days. In those days the nursery school was very secluded, and these children loved the countryside; it was not like here, where the nursery schools are closed in, what he had was the open air and the boy really settled in. What kids like is open-air nursery schools where they can play and develop their capacities" (Interview with mother, 2009).

Today more children go to the community kindergarten and stay there until they are five, when they go on to preschool. At this age children have a greater awareness of what is involved in the shift from home to school. Some of them resist and weep, others really enjoy this change of scene and dynamics. Again, the relationship between the family and the kindergarten is essential for successful transitions.

Factors that impede successful transitions

There are some aspects that, in an unconscious way, impede successful transition processes. These have to do with emotional, spatial and temporal discontinuities in children's daily lives. Some kindergartens limit parent participation in the process of adaptation. One kindergarten teacher said that the best cooperation a father could give was, paradoxically, to take no part: "the parents' role should be to leave the children and not to take them home if they cry... these parents are not very committed to the kindergarten." "The parents who really are committed to the kindergarten are those who leave their child—they know that the child will cry for a while when they leave, and will then join the other children upon seeing them at play" (ICBF Kindergarten teacher, 2009).

This reveals a conception of transition as a one-time process that ends when the child stops crying and is left in the care of the institution without direct interference by the parents and without further ado: *"they cry for only a moment when they are left, if they have not adapted very well they might continue crying for a week or two, but the next week they will be calm and they will enter into daily games and activities"* (ICBF community kindergarten teacher, February 2009).

Nevertheless, these processes last much longer depending on the subjective conditions and the context in which the children are living. In some cases active resistance may cease, but in other, less explicit forms of resisting change may persist; this study was unable to assess them. We found one very complex case where a girl went through two years in which she suffered greatly at school even though her family and the teachers were right there to help her: she was never able to feel comfortable and accept school as something positive.

To this point children have made daily moves between home, the community and the nursery school (horizontal moves), they have related with other children and other adults, they have affirmed their cultural links and they have created a broader social world. This stage marks an important milestone in their socialization and construction of their self-image. At the end of this stage, children are ready to make vertical moves in their experience of school life.

3.1.2. Education Agents

Education agents differ depending on the age of the children. For those through the age of five, education agents are kindergarten teachers or community mothers who have no specialized academic training. Rather, they are family mothers who place themselves and their home at the service of the ICBF, the institution responsible for assessing the conditions presented by community mothers, and community needs.

a) Community mothers

Generally speaking, community mothers have little education (grade 9 at most). The ICBF provides them with training in childcare, nutrition and pedagogical and recreational activities that will prepare children for school.

One aspect that is highly favorable to the transition process is that the community mothers belong to the Embera Chamí community, have already raised their children, have room in their homes, and have some experience in looking after children. Some of them have been engaged in this work for more than 20 years. They have a special mystique because of their role, and this is vital to the transition process for they stress relations of affection with the children, something that in our judgment is very important in the transition process, as they must first establish a high level of trust with the children and their parents before they can pursue other activities with the children.

b) The teachers

Teachers are key players in children's transitions, which they influence through their attitude, training and cultural affiliation. It is the teachers who are responsible for guiding the children in the most formative school environments—preschool and the first year of primary school. Although they conduct some activities that promote successful transitions, they know little about the issue and they have no institutional guidelines for supporting the process.

On the other hand, teachers at the preschool level are generally not from the community, do not speak the local language, and do not live on the reservation. Some have preschool or special-education certificates, but most have degrees in other specialties, in particular the social sciences. They take courses with the Ministry of Education or seek preschool teacher training on their own.

The Portachuelo principal is aware that there is a shortage of preschool training on the reservation: *"we do not have any accredited preschool teachers, preschool teacher training is very precarious."* (Portachuelo principal, 2009). The municipal secretary of education, however, thinks it is enough for a teacher to have some degree of training: *"teachers in the municipality are licensed teachers, with normal school diplomas, or they have competence to work at these levels"* (SE interview, 2009).

At present, because of the educational policy of optimizing coverage and resources, teachers are allocated according to the student headcount. Consequently, in some schools where enrollment is low, some grades will be merged to achieve the desired teacher-student ratio. In the case of Portachuelo, this has resulted in rolling together grades as dissimilar as preschool and the fourth year of primary school: *"The technical rule is to merge grades, we always do this on the basis of the number of students, the groups with the fewest students are the ones that are merged, and the teacher has to guide both groups. Unfortunately this year we have reduced enrollment ... this merger of grades is due to declining enrollment and compliance with the student-teacher ratio."*

"The teacher has to be a wizard to cope with all these grades. Of the institution's eight branches this is the biggest one, with the possibility of having five teachers, but we have some branches where there are three teachers for six grades. The rest of the branches are multigrade schools with only one teacher who has to cover all grades. That is why we have to resort to active pedagogy, we manipulate the guidelines, the teachers have to know how to handle every grade and act like wizards, as I said, but we've had no problems." (Portachuelo principal, 2009).

In some cases this can cause real problems, both for the teacher and for the children, who have to share the same space with different levels and ages, all with their own needs. In other cases there is an advantage because the older children will help the younger ones and this creates a climate of greater confidence for children in their first school experience. We found that this can do much for the transition process, as younger children feel more confident when they are with older ones. *"The kids really like it when I read to them, they would rather ask me than the teacher"* (Julian, an overage student in grade 4, who is in the same class with preschoolers, 2009).

Another important change in education policy is the so-called "educational revolution," the purpose of which is to optimize resources by merging single-room schools that were teaching grades 1 to 5—and which depending on the number of children have only one teacher with full autonomy—with other schools that go up to grade 9, where the teacher loses autonomy. *"The teacher ran things, the teacher taught, when Law 715 came out governing mergers they started to combine schools...but they didn't pay much attention to the geographic issue, and whether one school was close to the other, or whether they were on the same reservation...This was a tough change for the communities because previously they had so few schools and they were so far apart; then they started to build their own schools so that the school became part of the community and could be conducted in a single education center..."*

The *cabildo* had no say in the appointment of teachers but had to abide by what the Ministry of Education decided. Because of changes in territorial policies and an unprecedented political situation in the department, an indigenous mayor was elected for Riosucio in 2003, and this opened the possibility of appointing indigenous teachers who knew the Embera culture and could help implement the reservation's own program.

One teacher describes how the process went: *"until 2001 education was traditional, there were very few schools, and they were far apart; there was a teaching staff, teachers who knew everything and who wielded great power in the community because of what they knew and because they lived in and were part of their community ... In 2003 when funding began to flow to the cabildos, there was a change because there is an item for education and the governors of that time started to think of having teachers from the communities themselves, but they did not have the concept of giving the community its "own education" program. They wanted to hire local teachers to boost employment, but they did not have the idea that the teachers should be from the community so they could teach about the community itself. So we started a group...to have teachers from the same communities, teaching in those communities...this was one of the education changes that happened..."* (Teacher interview, 2009).

The municipal education secretary has some objections as to the suitability of these teachers (*"In the municipality there are 96 people who have been appointed as indigenous teachers. They were appointed without any credentials, merely on the say of the leaders of the reservation"*). He thinks this reflects political maneuvering and considers it incompatible with cultural and educational objectives. *"This has been an interesting political development...there are some indigenous teachers who have shown real commitment to their ethnic group in their work...yet sometimes a teacher shows up who was never indigenous and then all of a sudden he presents himself as indigenous..."* (Municipal Secretary of Education, January 2008).

Despite these contradictions, many teachers are playing a very important role in guiding the children in their educational transitions. They have overcome great difficulties in doing their work, and many of them have taken a real interest in learning more about indigenous culture, mastering the language, supporting the "own education" idea, and imbuing it with human and social meaning, and this has all had a positive impact on the children's educational progress. The *cabildo* has said: *"We need to support the teachers, and not only in organizational terms. [There must be] suitable professional qualifications, a high-quality alternative education proposal, and the work must be done well, because it is for the community."*

There is a need to establish clear transition policies, to promote programs for implementing them, and to conduct awareness raising and training for teachers to strengthen educational transition in the indigenous communities.

c) Institution officials

For the study it was very important to approach the officials both of government institutions and of the *cabildos* responsible for education in the indigenous communities. Specifically, we look at three key players who have a determining impact on education policies and programs involving the communities.

Departmental and municipal education secretaries

The municipal and departmental education offices are responsible for rural education in Riosucio. This is delivered in accordance with national policies for rural education, leaving aside the fact that virtually all the rural population of the municipality is indigenous. *"The rural area is comprised entirely of reservations, and there is no difference between the reservations and the rural area"* (Riosucio Secretary of Education, 2009). Despite this statement, there is tension with the *cabildo* of Cañamomo Lomaprieta, as the local education program offered on the reservation does not have full institutional support and acceptance.

The *cabildo* document defending the local education (*educación propia*) program asserts that *"in our view, despite the many approaches by the indigenous authorities, the municipal and departmental authorities have not shown good will and have not complied with the ruling of the administrative tribunal and Law 21 of 1991 requiring consultation and coordination of activities within indigenous territories."* The document calls on education authorities to respect the existing standards in the education sector for indigenous communities, to consult in selecting teachers to work within the indigenous territories, and to hire back indigenous teachers who are familiar with the local curriculum but were removed.

It is apparent that, because these communities have not retained their language and have lost some of their cultural customs, such as dress and housing, they are not considered indigenous and therefore their "own education" program is not appreciated. The Riosucio Secretary of Education told us: *"we see a big difference between what they portray as their own indigenous uses and customs and the uses and customs of the majority population. I can't say much about what it means to be indigenous or not in Riosucio, because this is a very delicate issue. You will find that many urban dwellers around here might also be able to call themselves indigenous because they retain the same customs as those who call themselves indigenous."*

Nor has the *cabildo's* own education proposal gained much respect: in fact it has been dismissed as nothing more than the "new school,"¹⁹ without much technical discussion. *"There is a big conceptual difference and I am not convinced that in Riosucio they have really constructed their own education program, although they say they have, and on some reservations they have ignored the new school, but if you try to compare what they are doing, it essentially combines all the elements of the new school."*

These tensions make it difficult to implement policies and programs to improve educational transitions for indigenous children. Efforts are needed to raise awareness and introduce transition policies that are locally applicable in the indigenous communities, that will respect community views and interests, and that will support their efforts with clearer technical criteria.

Despite this situation, the municipal Secretary of Education showed great interest in the issue of transitions and a willingness to support appropriate policies in this respect.

Education officials in the indigenous cabildos

¹⁹ The New School is a unified multigrade teaching model for use in schools with few students.

Every reservation has an education representative who is part of the *cabildo* and works with a community support group to implement policies developed by the reservation and the national government. There is great interest in early childhood education, and the issue of transitions was therefore well received and understood. They are in a position to support the topic with research and the development of strategies for application in the reservation, for they think this proposal is linked to what is being proposed in their “own education” principles.

The pedagogical basis relates to aspects that are pertinent to the education offered and that are linked with the natural rhythms of the community, with the development of the Community Education Project, culturally and geographically relevant study plans and curriculum, establishment of indigenous school calendars consistent with the uses and customs of each village, and specific indigenous pedagogical models (collective construction of knowledge comparable to other kinds of knowledge). They are also linked with the establishment of rules governing the entry age for indigenous school, assessment, monitoring and control by the traditional indigenous government, research and development of knowledge, creation and training of human talent, educational quality from the indigenous viewpoint, production of indigenous education materials and academic and nonacademic training and learning processes at all levels, in a multilingual and pluricultural context.

It additionally maintains that *"we must also take into account the teacher, the parents, the children, community leaders, traditional governors and authorities, for they all play an important role in the educational life of the Embera Chamí people in the department of Caldas, where the traditional healer harmonizes mother nature and ancestral knowledge."*

One aspect that facilitates successful transitions for children in the Embera Chamí communities is the great receptivity and willingness of the *cabildo* authorities and those responsible for education on the reservation.

Regional “education operators”

The Ministry of Education, through the departmental and municipal education offices, contracts regional or national institutions to act as “education operators”—service providers—responsible for implementing national education policy and resources. In Caldas, the operator is the Coffee Growers’ Federation, and it runs the “New School” and “School and Coffee” programs, which have demonstrated their effectiveness in rural areas. However, these programs are not fully accepted on the Cañamomo Lomapieta reservation because they do not take into account the philosophical, anthropological, sociological, pedagogical and psychological principles of the community’s “own education” program.

On this point, the Municipal Secretary of Education considers that the reservation’s opposition to having the Coffee Growers’ Committee serve as the operator boils down to a question of resources. *"The reservation that has the greatest problem in accepting the New School is the Cañamomo Lomapieta reservation." Most of the funding for the New School comes from the coffee growers committee, he explained, and the community is insisting that it should itself administer the funds for rural indigenous education, rather than have the Committee do it.*

Some teachers from other reservations explain this conflict by the fact that there is still no “own education” program to replace the New School. *"On the reservation there have been some disputes with the coffee growers’ committee.... we have been working with the committee there, and it is the committee that has built the classrooms that we need. We find ourselves in disagreement with the reservation, because on the reservation they tell us that you are going to work out your own education program, but they have not given us the guidelines for that, these still have to be worked out.*

"... The directors proposed to the governor here (San Lorenzo), that we will work with the New School until we receive a curriculum in order to address education in the different venues. This is what we have, and therefore at this time the venues are working with the New School model, which is what the Committee promotes."

The thinking on the reservation is that the education offered by the coffee growers' committee does not take account of the particular features of the worldview of the indigenous communities, their environmental, ethnic and cultural diversity, and that it promotes coffee growing to the detriment of the variety of species and products that the indigenous communities work with, and it disrupts their own educational approach, which is geared toward *"consolidating and implementing a local education program that incorporates recognition of diversity, self-determination to promote respect, leadership, participation, community and social work, articulating know-how, knowledge and technology, to make education an integral process, with recognition of the community as an indigenous people, diverse, multicultural and autonomous, which creates its own knowledge and technical, technological, scientific, political and cultural know-how that will contribute to the existence of the Cañamomo people."*

3.2. Scenarios

3.2.1. The Family Home

The deep-rooted cultural view of housing on the Cañamomo Lomapieta reservation *"relates to the sacred space or site where the family meets to relax after a long day of work or study; it is a space where there is permanent communication between parents and children, where we can come together to consider the present and plan for the future, and where we find harmony that allows us to meet with the Spirit night after night"* (Governor of the cabildo, 2009). With the process of acculturation, this concept has been modified and adapted to the economic conditions that indigenous people face, which we may say in general terms amount to poverty.

The houses of the families in the study thus correspond in a way to the internal structure and condition of the families themselves. As such, the houses of families headed by women are less sound structurally, and are therefore more limited as environments for the integral development of children.

3.2.2. The School

The schools on the reservation are not unitary primary schools, but have been merged with other educational institutions to offer instruction up to grade 9. As one consequence of this, the physical facilities of the schools have improved but have lost sight of the traditional notion of the community school. School management has become more technical, something that may improve the education process (with a principal who manages material and teaching resources in accordance with Institutional Education Projects), but which also brings some disadvantages related to meeting coverage targets.

Teachers described how the coverage policy had been implemented, and the changes it had brought. *The community has lost some of its sense of "ownership" of the school, they said. "In the past the community itself managed the school and kept it supplied but now, with the merger, there is one person officially in charge of all this, and the community bond has been broken."*

Previously it did not matter how many children there were in the school, the teacher taught them all. Now, with the merger, all the children enrolled are lumped together, and there may even be one or two teachers 'left over.' The teachers are feeling great pressure, as the departmental government is planning further mergers to make even bigger schools." As one teacher put it, *"in my school we have*

160 students, so for them this is a loss, while there may be 400 or 500 or more students in an urban school."

In this process quality is being sacrificed for the sake of broader coverage—"just to have a lot kids in the school"—and in some cases the relevance of instruction and its cultural context are now lost from sight. Moreover, some children live too far away to attend school every day. It has been suggested that those children could come to school one or two days a week, but the teachers are resisting this idea as bad for the children's education. "Going to school for two days is not the same thing as going to school for the whole week." Yet they are facing criticism that they are "doing nothing" to help those children, and they feel this is unfair.

At the same time, enrollment in the indigenous communities has declined, making the merger even more complicated. "With the new coverage policy, they are opening preschools in places where it would never have been thought feasible before. In the past they would open a preschool if there were 15 children, say, and now there are preschools with only one or two kids, or maybe four at most."

The Secretary of Education sees this situation as betraying negligence on the part of the indigenous authorities, for failing to require indigenous parents to send their children to school. "...that is a big fight because there really is no authority for that. There are real challenges there in that one is enough of an authority to complain to the State, but not to—within the same community—force indigenous parents to take their children to school" (Municipal Secretary of Education, 2009).

Despite these new circumstances, the school is still the best place for socializing children, and allowing them to cope with the challenges of human development.

3.2.3. Preschool

Children are accepted into preschool at the age of five. Many parents do not take their children to preschool and prefer to leave them in the community daycare center, which not only operates for longer hours but also provides meals.

If there are enough children at the preschool level they will be assigned a special classroom, appropriately decorated with childhood themes. Otherwise, they will share a classroom with the other primary grades. The schools conduct initiation activities for children entering preschool, and at the end of the year there is a graduation ceremony as a send-off to primary school. These represent ad hoc activities in support of transitions, but there are no explicit institutional guidelines to deal with difficulties that may arise.

One aspect that facilitates this process is that the children have already been through the community kindergarten. This means that they can adapt more readily, they are "savvy" and they know what to expect in preschool. As one teacher put it, the children who have not been to kindergarten or the community daycare center "will still not have adapted to school by March or April. They are already big kids, five years old, but they have never been away from home."

The children handle the change from kindergarten to preschool very well, as their social setting expands and they take on new responsibilities and activities. We asked one five-year-old girl which school she liked best. "I like this year's school best, because my teacher calls me Virginia. I can do things, I can make drawings, I have a little drawing book" (2009).

3.2.4. The First Grade of Primary School

In the first grade children are expected to cope with stiffer academic challenges than they had in kindergarten and preschool. The curriculum becomes more formal and there is less emphasis on play as an educational strategy. This reflects our society's persistent idea that as children grow up life becomes "more serious".

One mother offered a graphic description of the changes that children experience in the transition from kindergarten to the first grade of primary school: the importance of play gradually declines as the child goes on to things that are deemed more important. *"The kids are accustomed to nursery school where play is everything and they are taught very little, then they go to kindergarten and they start to learn. They are taught a lot, but they miss their playtime—they used to be able to play all day, and now they have to study, which is very different. And when they go on to primary school even the games they played in kindergarten are left behind, and now what's really important is to study full-time."*

It will be important in subsequent stages to go more deeply into the value of play as a key element in the process of transition and of integral human development for children, from early childhood onwards.

Some teachers think that one of the key challenges for children entering primary school is to relate to a person with whom they have not yet established a basis of trust and who is placing academic demands on them. *"The first challenge that children at this age face upon coming to school is fear—having a teacher who places demands on them. Of course there are demands at home, too, but it's quite a different thing to have a teacher insisting that they listen to what he is saying and do what he tells them"* (Teacher interview at San Lorenzo, 2009). This brings us back to the teacher's own view of this relationship: the teacher's role is to place academic demands on children, making the education process unattractive and fear-inducing.

3.3. Practices

3.3.1. Specific Actions

Neither at the local nor the institutional level do we find any policy guidelines or structured programs setting out procedures, timeframes and conditions that will support children's experience of educational transitions. Yet in the local approach to education offered on the Cañamomo Lomapieta reservation there are some aspects that could relate more clearly to this process.

However, the experience from the case study suggests that in all scenarios the players support transitions through practices that vary in their formality and structure. Some are more ad hoc than others, but all are intended to facilitate children's transit through these levels of socialization and "learning to learn." According to Vogler (2008), these vertical and horizontal movements are respectively captured by the concept of "rites of passage" (e.g. first school day) and "border crossings" (e.g. daily movements between home and school).

In this section we shall describe the forms that these vertical and horizontal movements take, from the viewpoint of different players.

When it comes to adapting to the first experience with institutional education, in *kindergarten*, the community mothers pursue strategies to facilitate children's transition, through a process of mutual confidence building. *"In the kindergarten, when the children arrive in February we make an effort to get to know them, we place little stress on the usual activities, but rather we talk with them, we ask how they felt when they woke up this morning, what they had for breakfast, and things that will establish a bond of trust and familiarity with them"* (Interview with a community mother, 2009).

Likewise, kindergarten teachers work to strengthen children's capacities for independence in handling space and their own bodies. The teachers use demonstrative strategies for the children to feed themselves and to learn sphincter control. *For example, the teacher will accompany a child to the bathroom for the first time and let him or her see other children "going peepee alone." After six months or so, three-year-olds will be going to the bathroom alone.*

On this point Vogler (2008) cites Vygotsky's notion of learning as a process that results in development, and not vice versa. It is therefore through instruction from teachers, adults and more skilled peers that children learn and develop. Post-Vygotskian researchers developed the idea of "scaffolding" to capture the assistance children receive from their peers and adult instructors in reaching new developmental goals (Wood et al., 1976).

In the case study we find that the school performs a kind of "rite of passage" through short, one-time events for welcoming the children in preschool and the first year of primary school; these events create a friendly climate in the school. There is a "welcome party" for children when they enter preschool, and again when they begin primary school. When children have completed preschool there is a graduation ceremony where they are made to feel that they are now "bigger" and can handle the challenge of primary school.

While these activities are important, they are not sufficiently structured to address the different adaptation needs of children over time. Once the child enters preschool he or she is expected to stop crying within a few days and to join in the group and in the activities proposed by the teacher.

Vogler and others note that "research on early institutional transitions has tended to conceptualize transitions as a 'one-point' event (e.g. first day at primary school). However, since the late 1990s research directions have been shifting, with more studies understanding transitions as a multilayered and multiyear process, involving multiple continuities and discontinuities of experience (Petriwskyj, Thorpe & Taylor, 2005, p.63)" (Vogler 2008).²⁰

The guidance of culturally competent peers and adults as well as the mediation of culturally meaningful symbols allows children to become more confident in their ability to perform culturally valued routines and activities and in their acquired skills.

In order to ease the transition for children and give them a sense of continuity, some teachers on the reservation encourage the mother to remain in the classroom for a while, rather than simply drop the child off at school and then go away. This reinforces the child's sense of emotional security. It is not an institutionally planned activity, but something worked out directly between the teacher and the mother.

3.3.2. Vertical and Horizontal Articulations

We shall refer here to vertical and horizontal articulations as proposed by Rocio Abello (2008), who defines *vertical articulation, in its broad sense, as the "relations of interaction between educational grades and levels, which presupposes an institutional education plan that allows for coherence and convergence of actions in a framework of complementarity, coherence, flexibility, globality and critical self-reflection that gives meaning to daily school experience in the continuously shifting context of the so-called knowledge and information societies."*

²⁰ Vogler, P., Crivello, G. & Woodhead, M. Early childhood transitions research: a review of concepts, theory and practice. Working Papers in Early Childhood Development #48. The Hague, Netherlands. Bernard van Leer Foundation

Horizontal articulations she defines as the *"relations of interaction between school, family, community, institutions, sectors and society which, in turn, support the school in its education function, serving as benchmarks for the [day-to-day] movements that must be made to respond contextually to the dynamics of social, cultural and political changes in the local, regional, national and international context."*

On the Cañamomo Lomaprieta reservation there are informal but highly effective practices of vertical and horizontal articulation that have been configured in practice, without any explicit intention, but that facilitate children's transitions.

One community mother told us of her experience of coordination between kindergarten and school, based on the friendship that has been established between the teachers at the two levels. *"There's no special activity, but I have very good relations with the preschool teacher, and she often brings her kids here and I take mine there and we put them together. Since her students used to be in my kindergarten, they know me, and they say 'let's go to Nubia's.' This is an activity that we have promoted ourselves, without any guidance from the school, and we do it every year"* (Nubia Amparo Garcia, ICBF, 2009).

Some dynamics have been established between the kindergarten and the Portachuelo school to ease the passage of children between kindergarten and school. One aspect that very likely has an influence on this experience has to do with the fact that the community mother is indigenous; she has very close relations with the school, and is skilled in traditional ceramics-making, an art she shares with the teachers and students as part of the curriculum in the Portachuelo school (vertical articulation).

Another aspect that favors horizontal articulation is the physical proximity between the kindergarten and the school. Children entering the preschool still have access to the kindergarten playground: when they leave school they will have lunch and they will stay in the playground until their families come for them at 4 PM. In this case the daily (horizontal) moves take place in familiar settings, with players who share common visions and actions in terms of care and attention. In this sense, informally, a strategy of continuity and articulation has been forged and it is having very good results with the children of these two institutions.

"The children go to school half days and then they come here in the afternoon. They are at school from 8 to 12, and then from 12 to 4 in the afternoon they come here for lunch, to drink something, and to engage in afternoon activities" (Interview with kindergarten teacher, 2009).

In contrast to the more planned activities, these processes have no predetermined time schedule, their duration depends on the children themselves, and they are flexible. *"Some will last a month, and then the kids will already have adapted to school. Three years ago, the ICBF did not allow this, but now we have permission to keep these children in the kindergarten during the afternoon, for one thing because the kids need food, and also because they miss their home, their parents and siblings. Yet there are some who do not miss home, they feel more grown up and they are comfortable and very independent at school."*

"Instead of looking at children as separate entities who over time will become capable of participating in society, we may consider them as beings who are intrinsically part of the social world, even before they are born, in constant progress throughout their development as to their ability to carry out independent activities appropriate to their culture, and even to organize them" (Rogoff, 1990, page 22).

Vertical articulations between preschool and the first year of primary are supported by ad hoc activities that are less developed and have perhaps less impact. One teacher at San Lorenzo thought the transitions topic interesting. The institution did not pay much attention to it, he said, but there was concern over cases of extreme mal-adaptation and high dropout rates: *"we have one girl who has been here for two years and still won't come to school alone, she has to come with her sister. We don't know what is the root of her fear; maybe it's fear of the teacher or an authority figure."*

While there are no shared strategies between the kindergarten and the school for facilitating transitions, the teachers consider it very important that children have the experience of being in kindergarten before entering school. *"It's one way for kids to acquire an attitude of interaction with others. When a child has been through kindergarten and has graduated to preschool you can see it in his attitude, a positive, bright, alert attitude, while a child who never went to kindergarten is the opposite, he will be withdrawn. This is a very important experience because it is the first relationship that the child has with his peers and with the community mother, and it is the first time that demands are placed on him. I think this is one of the best forms of discipline for children, that they should have to keep to a schedule, that they should have responsibilities, these are very important aspects that a child must experience in these institutions"* (teacher interview, 2009).

With respect to the continuities and discontinuities in the education process, we find a variety of opinions. These range from the viewpoint of Fabian and Dunlop, quoting Page (2000), who suggests that for a child to experience discontinuity is part of the continuum of life and learning, and therefore children must build resilience to change and be given support to help them negotiate change, to the idea of promoting politically and institutionally assisted continuities that will achieve harmony and coordination between family, school, community and local institutions (Abello 2008).

4. Conclusions From the Study

Players

1. Children are not seen as players capable of contributing to and participating in their own transition processes, an aspect that limits the integral development of the child and the configuration of socially pro-positive subjectivities.
2. Family, community, school and institutional players involved in educational transitions do not take the steps necessary to articulate properly the processes experienced by children of the Cañamomo Lomaprieta indigenous reservation.
3. It is important to learn from the processes of articulation employed on a daily basis by mothers, kindergarten and other teachers, and use them to establish clear guidelines for supporting these moves with better conditions for articulation and continuity in transition scenarios and actions.
4. Vertical transitions are seen as one-time events and not as structural periods in which children need support for achieving educational transitions.
5. It is vital to strengthen links between the family, the kindergarten and the school as an explicit strategy for strengthening educational transition processes.
6. The training of kindergarten and schoolteachers needs to be raised to the highest levels because this will determine to a large extent whether children can make successful transitions and adapt to the school environment, and it is therefore key to reducing dropout and repetition rates.
7. Teachers are assigned according to the student headcount, which means that in some institutions a teacher may have to cover as many as six grades.

8. For the most part, preschool teachers receive no specialized training.
9. With the "new school" model, a single teacher has to give classes from preschool to fifth grade. In some cases this poses real problems, both for the teacher and for the students, who must share the same space with different levels and ages, all of which have their own needs. In other cases, this can be an advantage, as the older children will help the younger ones and this creates a climate of confidence that is important for children in their first school experience.
10. The Embera Chamí community of Cañamomo Lomapieta have succeeded in having the education secretariat accept some indigenous teachers who can instruct children in the ancestral ways of their communities—their dances, music, ceramics, and mythical vision.
11. The education service "operator" selected by the education secretariat is the Colombian Federation of Coffee Growers, but the indigenous authorities have not accepted this for all schools on the reservation. This is a source of permanent tension and disagreement, for the educational model supported by the Federation is that of the "new school," geared to producing coffee.
12. The transition from the home to the first educational experience is more difficult for children who have not been through the ICBF nurseries and who enter school directly at the preschool level or the first year of primary school.

Scenarios

13. The households covered by the study have lost the traditions of Embera dwellings and have built themselves houses in the "campesino" style. They live in conditions of poverty that impede the full development of children. For this reason some mothers think that sending their children to kindergarten is better than keeping them at home.
14. The ICBF nurseries take children from birth to five years. Depending on the number of children, the nursery may be conducted in the community mother's home or, if there are more than 20 children, the ICBF has a special building. The community mothers generally have a basic education and receive ongoing training from the ICBF.
15. Many children spend their early childhood in the ICBF nursery, where the community mothers work to help them adapt with little or no parental involvement.
16. The school has undergone tremendous changes as a result of education policies to enhance coverage, and their implications for the quality of educational transitions should be studied more thoroughly.

Practices

17. There are no policy guidelines or programs designed to improve educational transitions in rural and indigenous communities at the national, departmental or local levels.
18. Although the policy establishes significant programmatic links between the ICBF nurseries, which provide education and care for children through the age of five, there are no practical guidelines for linking the nurseries more closely with educational institutions.
19. There has been progress in the handling of vertical articulation between preschool and primary, but there are no specific guidelines and no special programs for indigenous communities.
20. There has been little progress in establishing strategies to improve horizontal articulations between community, family and school.

21. Transitions are not a topic dealt with in the agendas of education supervisors or in the academic coordination offices of educational institutions. Despite a clear awareness that this process deserves greater attention, there are no mechanisms or strategies for addressing it. Those who concern themselves with it are primarily the teachers and mothers, and they do so informally as the children progress. Many children never complete this stage, and they drop out of school to return when they are older.
22. The strategies for supporting vertical transitions within the school and with the kindergarten depend more on the personal initiatives of teachers than on any institutional guidelines.
23. Some teachers allow mothers to remain with their child in the classroom until the child gains confidence, but there are no institutional plans for involving parents directly in this transition process.
24. There are no projects for articulating ICBF programs with the schools, although the community mothers and teachers believe that there should be. Community mothers know the children very well and they could make an important contribution to the transition process from kindergarten to preschool.

5. Lessons Learned From and For Education Policy

1. Families are key players in facilitating the transition process, but there needs to be an outreach campaign to make them aware of the importance of transitions for the integral development of children.
2. Communities need to be given support in developing their own education programs.
3. There is a need for national policies and articulation mechanisms between the ICBF kindergartens and the school and between preschool and the first year of basic education.
4. Teachers need special training in culturally appropriate initial and preschool education to support the transition of children, with an emphasis on rural, indigenous and border communities.
5. Children are not seen as players capable of contributing to and participating in their own transition processes, and this aspect limits their integral development and the configuration of socially pro-positive subjectivities.
6. Family, community, academic and institutional players involved in educational transitions do not have the levels of articulation needed to support properly the processes experienced by children on the Cañamomo Lomapieta indigenous reservation.
7. It is important to learn from the processes of articulation employed on a daily basis by mothers, kindergarten mistresses and teachers, and use them to establish clear guidelines for supporting these moves with better conditions for articulation and continuity in transition scenarios and actions.
8. Vertical transitions are seen as one-time events and not as structural periods in which children need support for achieving educational transitions.
9. It is vital to strengthen links between the family, the kindergarten and the school as an explicit strategy for strengthening educational transition processes.
10. The training of kindergarten and schoolteachers needs to be raised to the highest levels, because this will determine to a large extent whether children can make successful transitions and adapt to the school environment, and it is therefore key to reducing dropout and repetition rates.

Bibliography:

- Abello, R. (2008). Transiciones al Inicio de la Escolaridad: Una experiencia de construcción de sentido. Informe de Tesis Doctoral. Doctorado en Ciencias Sociales Niñez y Juventud, CINDE–Universidad de Manizales.
- Alvarado, S. V. (2008). Socialización política de los niños y las niñas en edad preescolar, formación de valores y procesos de participación infantil. Paper presented at a world conference on early childhood education, Monterrey, 2008. Manizales: CINDE- Universidad de Manizales.
- Bañol, J. P. (2008). Educación propia, un camino de resistencia de identidad cultural del pueblo Embera Chamí del departamento de Caldas, Riosucio, Colombia. Informe del Consejo Regional Indígena de Caldas, CRIDEC.
- Chant, S. (2003). *New contributions to the analysis of poverty: methodological and conceptual challenges to understanding poverty from a gender perspective*. United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean, Women and Development Unit. Published by United Nations Publications, New York, 2003. ISBN 9213222742, 9789213222744, 74 pages.
- Giraldo, A. M. et al. (1995). Diagnóstico Ambiental Zona Indígena de Risaralda. Pereira: Carder-Cabildo Mayor Único de Risaralda.
- Kabeer, N. (2003). *Gender mainstreaming in poverty eradication and the millennium development goals*. Canadian International Development Agency, International Development Research Centre (Canada, Commonwealth Secretariat). Published by IDRC, Ottawa. Mexico, D. F.: Plaza y Valdés S. A. de C. V. 2006. 264 pages.
- OIA (1990). Memorias del Simposio sobre Cultura Embera, V Congreso Colombiano de Antropología, Antioquia, Colombia.
- Perafán, C. C. Et al. (1996). Sistemas Jurídicos Tucano, Chamí, Guambiano y Sikuani. Informe Final. Bogotá: Colciencias, Ican, Colcultura.
- Romero, L. & Fernando (2000). Entre los Embera-Chamí: aspectos educativos, la oralidad y la escritura. Pereira: Universidad Tecnológica de Pereira. (Online). Retrieved in November 2007 from: http://www.lacult.org/docc/oralidad_12_35-41-entre-los-embera-chami.pdf. Consulted in: November 2007.
- Salazar, F., Sarmiento, A. & Murcia, U. (2008). Áreas protegidas, resguardos indígenas y zonas de reserva forestal de la ley 2ª de 1959 de Colombia en el ámbito de Raisg. (Online). Retrieved in January 2009 from: http://www.raisg.socioambiental.org/files/Amazonia_Colombiana.pdf
- Vasco, G. (2007). Los Embera Chamí del departamento de Caldas. (Online). Retrieved on 15 February 2009 from: <http://www.luguiva.net/articulos/detalle.aspx?id=60>

Chapter III. CHILE CASE STUDY

MAHUIDACHE COMMUNITY,— 80% INDIGENOUS MAPUCHE

*Report presented by:
Government of Chile, JUNJI*



Introduction. 1. Background and Context of the Study. 1.1. Population and Ethnic Origin. 1.2. Language: Use and Command of the Indigenous Language. 1.3. Principal Institutions and Organizations in the Community. 1.4. Principal Sources of Income in the Community. 1.5. Principal Rites and Beliefs. 1.6. Family Characteristics and Child-Rearing Norms. 1.7. The Origins of the Rukantun Kindergarten and the Mahuidache School. 2. Early Childhood Transitions as Experienced by the Child, the Family and the Community. 2.1. The Meaning of Kindergarten. 2.2. Pros and Cons of Kindergarten. 2.3. Expectations of the Kindergarten. 2.4. The Meaning of the School. 2.5. Pros and Cons of the School. 2.6. Expectations with Respect to the School. 3. Conclusions. 4. Lessons Learned From and For Education Policy. Bibliography.

Introduction

For its case study, the Chilean research team selected children in the locality of Mahuidache in the Freire commune (*comuna*, municipality), Araucania region. The commune has a population of 25,514, of whom 43.6% are of Mapuche origin; of that group, 58.6% speak the Mapudungun language. The community of Mahuidache itself is 80% Mapuche.

The Chilean study as originally designed covered a sample of children three years and under. However, because indigenous children have difficulty expressing themselves verbally at that age, and because the purpose of the study was to gain a comprehensive understanding of the various kinds of education transitions experienced by children in the zone, it was decided to expand the study group to include children between the ages of four and eight. This was considered all the more appropriate because the Mahuidache kindergarten and the local school share the same physical premises and in effect constitute an educational unit, with a single principal and significant interaction between the two levels.

Mahuidache is a small community, located in a rural setting on the banks of the Quepe River. It has no basic services; to receive health care, its inhabitants are obliged to travel some distance to town of Quepe, where there is a rural health post that offers primary care. The public services in greatest demand are available in the city of Freire, and regional services are centered in Temuco, the capital of Region IX (Araucania).

This area was originally covered by native forests, but have been progressively removed under the impact of increased logging and clearing of land for gardens and crops. The banks of the Quepe River are rocky, and only portions of the land are suitable for agriculture: farming is therefore enormously difficult.

1. Background and Context of the Study

1.1. Population and Ethnic Origin

The Mapuche ("people of the land") now constitute the third most populous indigenous society in America, and the best-preserved indigenous culture in Chile. They live in a region that extends from the Bio Bio River to Chiloé, and have a sparser presence in Argentina as well (2007). Within Chile, they are concentrated specifically in regions VIII, IX and X, where the aboriginal population is in the majority (604,349 persons).²¹ The Araucania Region is their natural territory, although today a third of them live in Santiago, the national capital.

The community of Mahuidache is a territory called a *lof* by the Mapuche (because it comprises several families who share the same land and consider themselves to be mutually related by blood, sometimes descended from a common ancestor, and they recognize the authority of a *lonko* or *cacique*). The identity of the *lof* is reinforced by various community activities and festivals.

The poverty rate among the Mapuche of Region IX is 42.1%, compared to 29.4% for the non-

²¹ 2002 Census data. Those data sparked surprise, for in the previous census (1992) 998,385 persons over the age of 14 years had declared themselves Mapuche, and if to that figure were added persons under 14 years the Mapuche total was around 1,355,000 individuals, representing 10% of the country's total population at that time.

indigenous population (2000).²²

The Mapuche economy is not based on the collective system, as once believed, but is rather an economy of "basic family individualism," further accentuated by forced settlement and the "nuclearization" of the Mapuche family. This problem is not confined to Mahuidache but is in fact one that the Mapuche people generally have experienced since the so-called "pacification" of Araucania, when the Mapuche were forced onto reservations and obliged to give up livestock grazing for farming, while the best lands were delivered to foreign or Chilean colonists. Thus, every nuclear family group that has a parcel of land makes its own decisions about what to grow, and will turn to other family groups only in need of cooperation or for a community activity (Luna, 2007).

1.2. Language: Use and Command of the Indigenous Language

Some 23% of the national indigenous population speak or understand their original language: there are 12.1% who speak and understand the language, and 10.8% who only understand it.²³

In rural areas, 21.4% speak and understand their original language, and 15.6% only understand it (i.e. 37% of the indigenous population speak and/or understand). In urban areas, only 8% speak and understand their original language, and 8.7% only understand it (i.e. 16.7% speak and/or understand).

In our analysis by age brackets, we found that the indigenous population that speak and/or understand their original language declined among all age groups between the years 2003 and 2005.²⁴

Proficiency in the Mapuche language in the Freire commune stands at around 58.6%.²⁵ The Mapuche language is an isolated tongue unique in Latin America, according to Nekul Painemal, the responsible official in the National Council for Indigenous Development (CONADI). The Mapuche or Mapudungun tongue, in general terms, is spoken by 18% of its population.²⁶ In 2002, the total speaking population was 20%, revealing a decline of around 2% in only eight years.

1.3. Principal Institutions and Organizations in the Community

The Mahuidache community is currently divided into 11 indigenous Mapuche (sub)communities.²⁷ For practical reasons, however, its inhabitants have had to adapt to new times, particularly because of administrative requirements for proposing productive projects. For example, to obtain funding for agricultural development projects by the National Institute for Agricultural Development (INDAP) or the "Origins Program" sponsored by CONADI: to be eligible for these instruments, applicants must belong to a legally constituted organization.²⁸ These communities are

²² According to Luna (2007) Mapuche poverty in this region dates back to the military occupation of Atlanta by the Chilean state under the so-called Atlanta Colonization Plan or "Pacification", designed to spur agricultural development in the region by awarding *ex gratia* occupancy title (*título de merced*) to the Mapuche and ownership title to the colonists. Between 1884 and 1929 at least 500,000 ha (of a total of 10 million actors) were allocated: foreign colonists were given 400 ha, Chileans 40 ha, and Mapuche families 6 ha.

²³ Ministerio de Planificación y Cooperación (Mideplan) Encuesta de Caracterización Socio Económica (Casen) 2006

²⁴ Idem.

²⁵ See *Perfil sociolingüístico de comunidades mapuche de la VIII, IX y X Región*. CONADI, Universidad Tecnológica Metropolitana. 2008, p. 132.

²⁶ Source: Nekul Painemal.

²⁷ The commune of Freire has 121 indigenous communities. Within the municipality there is a Mapuche communal council, with representation from each Mapuche community. It organizes the communities, programs and directs meetings, and sponsors committees to deal with such matters as rural electrification, road repairs, indigenous development, applying for rural grants, crops and competitions (Source: Municipalidad de Freire).

²⁸ Each sub-community has its own legal personality.

represented in the communal administrative structure by the Mapuche Communal Council, which meets periodically.

The “Rukantun” Kindergarten (*jardín infantil*) and the Mahuidache Primary School No. 147 are located in the indigenous (sub)community of Francisco Huenchuñir,²⁹ and the families participating in this research belong to three of the 11 indigenous communities of Mahuidache—namely José María Saavedra, Francisco Lincoñir, and Juan Aillape.

"Indigenous community" is understood as a grouping of persons belonging to the same ethnic group and descended from the same family tree, who recognize a traditional chief, own or once owned indigenous lands in common, and come from the same ancestral settlement (Indigenous Law, Article 9). Community membership is voluntary and functional, and comprises at least 25 individuals who share some common interest and objective.³⁰

These indigenous communities are organizations that meet, generally once a month, to organize a *guillatún* ceremony or to address needs and possibilities for new productive or development projects through which they can obtain housing or supplies. They also meet to resolve community problems such as the threat posed by construction of a new airport, a project that was fiercely opposed.

Every community has an executive board consisting of a president, a treasurer and a secretary, allowing them to operate within the country's administrative structure.

Population, Disaggregated by Sex, Age and Ethnic Origin, of the Communities to which the Children Covered by the Study Belong

Commune	Sub-Community	Sex		total	Average age	Ethnic group
		M	F			
Freire	José María Saavedra	89	75	164	42	Mapuche
Freire	Juan Aillape	47	59	106	47	Mapuche
Freire	Francisco Lincoñir	60	38	98	42	Mapuche

Source: National Statistics Institute

It will be noted that in two of the three communities men are in the majority: this may reflect emigration of the female population to the cities in search of work. It is a well-known fact that, despite the shortage of land, men tend to remain in their communities.

Principal institutions and organizations in the sector: their purpose and membership

Within the Mapuche indigenous community of Mahuidache there are the following organizations and institutions:

- *Junta de Vecinos Mahuidache* (neighborhood board)- 41 members
- *Comité Pequeños Agricultores “Francisco Licoñir”* (small farmers' committee)- 30 members

²⁹ Mr. Francisco Huenchuñir holds the *título de merced* for several families of the community, as this document is given to only one member.

³⁰ Common objectives may relate to the pursuit of various activities – education, occupational, economic – that will benefit members engaged in farming, livestock, fishing, crafts, etc. (Indigenous Law, Article 36).

- *Taller laboral La Estrella de Mahuidache* (workshop) -28 members
- *Taller Laboral Rayen Mapu* (workshop) -26 members
- *Club deportivo Juventud Católica* (sports club) -30 members
- *Club Deportivo Mahuidache* (sports club) -30 members
- *Club Deportivo “Colo Colo” Mahuidache* (sports club) - 11 members
(Source INE) 11 Mapuche indigenous communities: Antonio Hueñir, Condominio Mahuidache, Fernando Hueche, Francisco Huenchuñir, Francisco Lincoñir, José María Saavedra, Juan Aillape Freire, Juan Hueche, Maquehue, Maquehue 14.5 and Santiago Coñoeman.
- Catholic Church (monthly mass)
- Evangelical Church (weekly service)

1.4. Principal Sources of Income in the Community

Farming is the main source of income for people living in the communities of Mahuidache, as can be appreciated from the following table: farming represents about 71.8% of these three communities' income. The remaining sources of income include micro-enterprise and a small percentage of self-employment.

Nº	Name of Community	Main sources of income
1.	José María Saavedra	70.1% are engaged in farming, livestock, hunting and related activities
2.	Juan Aillape	80% are engaged in farming, livestock, hunting and related activities.
3.	Francisco Lincoñir	65.7% are engaged primarily in farming, livestock, hunting and related activities..

Source: National Statistics Institute

1.5. Principal Rites and Beliefs

The Mapuche religious system comprises a complex set of myths and beliefs, cosmology and rituals, and has survived despite the ongoing process of cultural change. Its leaders have managed to keep it alive through two mechanisms: first, by restricting oral transmission of its contents, and second by keeping it inaccessible and incomprehensible to non-Mapuches. The *machi* (female shaman) is the figure primarily responsible for carrying and transmitting the Mapuche religion: she performs various roles and rituals within the community, and is particularly involved in therapeutic and premonitory medicinal rites³¹ (Greve 1997, p. 60).

The three fundamental rites of the Mapuche people are the *guillatun*, the *machitun* and the *wetripantu*, all of which can be found in the Mahuidache community:

The **guillatun** is a ritual petition for prosperity, generally relating to the weather, sowing, harvest, abundance of food, the prevention of diseases, or wishes for strength and spiritual vitality for the community. Although every community performs this ritual periodically, Mahuidache does it every four years, or more frequently if necessary.

³¹ Greve, M. E. (1998). *Culturas indígenas de Chile: un estudio preliminar*. Pehuen.

The **machitun** is a ritual officiated by the *machi*. She invokes spirits that have the art of diagnosing illnesses and helps to treat them. Under the influence of Christianity the spirits have yielded ground to the God Creator or *Ngenechen*.

The **wetripantu** or New Year's ceremony is conducted every year. It is a sacred and festive day for the Mapuche, who always celebrate it on June 24. This annual ritual of renewing the balance of nature is the time in which the life force rises in the sap of the trees, renewing the land, the water, the air, all. It is a time of family harmony and friendship.

1.6. Family Characteristics and Child-Rearing Norms

The families of all the children studied belong to the Mapuche people; they are generally extended families, living within the same dwelling. The head of the household is a male, as the woman, upon marriage, follows the husband, and unmarried daughters with children remain in the paternal home.³² These are farming families: the parents and the staff of the kindergarten and school are for the most part engaged in market gardening. Most families have their own home.

Level of education: most fathers and mothers (70%) have completed basic education and the remainder have an incomplete basic education or some secondary schooling in arts and sciences or commerce.³³

The family has historically been the nucleus of Mapuche society,³⁴ and the primary social unit in the rearing of new generations, to which the cultural heritage, social relations and worldview of the Mapuche people, are handed down through day-to-day family life. Within the family, the mother has an important role in protecting and passing on this culture.

Grandparents also play a fundamental role, for which they are accorded the deepest respect. Grandchildren learn from them and are socialized in the Mapuche culture. Grandparents pass on their knowledge, language, tales, dreams and family stories, and validate these in their daily practice. In 33% of the families studied, the grandparents took care of the children. It was observed that within the family unit grandmothers have great influence, and children listen to their words attentively.

Childrearing norms

Childrearing norms refer to the pattern of behavior, conduct and actions that parents and other close relatives follow for raising and instructing their children. They are based on a framework of rules, traditions, values and educational standards that are put into practice in various ways.

In the Mapuche culture studied, childrearing or initial socialization is a process in which fathers and mothers, grandfathers and grandmothers, uncles and aunts, brothers and sisters have an important socializing role. Their strategies include persuasion and the use of models and anti-models.

³² Bengoa, J. (1992, p. 26). *Historia del pueblo mapuche. Siglo XIX y XX*. Ediciones Sur. Colección Estudios Históricos

³³ According to the INE, 8.6% of Mahuidache community members did not attend school, 3.2% have only pre-basic schooling, 66.8% have completed basic schooling, 9.3% have secondary schooling in the arts and sciences, 4% in commerce, 3.3% in industrial trades, and 1% in farming, and 1% have a vocational institute diploma; only 0.6% have university education. The data also reveal a gender discrepancy: only 46% of women have any formal education, as compared to 54% of men.

³⁴ Bengoa, J. (1996). *Población, familia y migración mapuche. Los impactos de la modernización en la sociedad mapuche*. In *Revista Pentukun*, 6 (Temuco: Instituto de Estudios Indígenas, Universidad de Frontera).

One of the distinguishing features of Mapuche culture is the art of counseling (*ngülam*), as several community members mentioned. The background information we collected indicates that counseling requires structured family relationships marked by etiquette and formality in parental interaction when taking decisions in different kinds of situations, parental consensus in responding to needs, consistency in parental roles, and the importance of advice. Communication relies primarily on "body language" and gestures, which generates a coherent process for transferring the message.

These practices involve the telling of stories of exemplary situations, recounted in places conducive to such conversation, such as around the family table.³⁵

The resources used are the spoken word, stories, games, rituals and ceremonies; the basis of Mapuche society and culture is oral, and memorizing oral history is of vital importance.

Family experience can come into play at any moment, particularly in the course of day-to-day family life and in direct parental interaction (grandparents/parents/aunts and uncles/siblings), especially in productive activities such as sowing, reaping, harvesting and animal husbandry, as well as in domestic chores such as going for water, collecting vegetables, eggs, firewood, picking fruit, feeding livestock, or doing the cleaning. From the child's birth, his or her parents and grandparents will keep him or her with them, everywhere and at all times.

Mapuche children assume responsibilities at a very young age. They learn by observing and cooperating in family chores, where error is part of the learning process; "watching and doing" or "learning by doing" is the most widely used learning process. The father will seldom explain to his son how to do something, but will show him instead. Similarly, the daughter will watch and imitate how a design is knitted or how a baby is cared for. Older siblings are very patient and they look after and play with their younger brothers and sisters from an early age.³⁶

It is a distinctive trait of the Mapuche family relationship, then, that parents make scant use of verbalization with their children, and this is true to some extent for other members of the family as well. From our observations in the communities, it seems that communication can be conveyed in silence, and silence often replaces more drastic punishment or reprimands. On the other hand, a gesture of congratulation can also be conveyed silently—the father may give a pat on the back, the mother may prepare a special treat for the child, special permission may be granted, etc. Direct verbal communication will be reserved for situations that demand it, such as when a serious mistake is made. But metaphor will always be used, and lessons will be conveyed through various cultural mechanisms.

Mapuche knowledge is a socialized product, the result of permanent observation of the changes that children see and feel in the elements of nature, taking only what is necessary.

For the Mapuche people, children's development, growth and education take place within the family. It is there that they learn to become good people, wise, fair, clean, and with a diversity of knowledge. Children are taught family values and respect for grandparents as the carriers of the community's wisdom. As the Mapuche see it, children are "a work in progress" and their prospects for development depend on their social setting.³⁷ It is only in this way that a child can become a *kim che*, a respectable person.³⁸

³⁵ In the past, around the fire.

³⁶ *Historia de los pueblos indígenas en Chile* (1998, p. 127-128). JUNJI

³⁷ Cofre, I. (2008). Sistematización del Taller Pautas de Crianza mapuche

³⁸ Luna (2007, pp. 74/75). *Un mundo entre dos mundos*. Ediciones Universidad Católica de Chile

The family group pitches in as soon as it is known that the mother is pregnant, and one of its first tasks will be to make a cradle for the baby. This cradle is something very special: it can be hung on the wall or carried on the back. Ensnconced in the cradle, the child can participate directly with its elders in family chats and can watch them when they are working. We may note that both parents interrelate with their children, but the mother is responsible for their feeding, clothing and cleanliness. The father will tend to reinforce what the mother has taught, but the child will also be greatly influenced by its grandparents.

The Mapuche child learns primarily through its senses—the sounds of the wind, animals, birds, fire, water, his or her tactile sense and, of course, sight. Children are encouraged to be observant at all times, even when nursing. They are taught songs, gestures and signals from an early age; they will later be told stories which will help them develop their thinking and creativity. By the age of three they will be learning farm chores, they will be gathering little bread buns, doing minor clothes washing, or going to look for wood. At around the age of four they will begin to assume different roles within the home, perhaps gathering firewood or feeding the animals. By five they are required to obey family rules and they will be corrected when they err. Physical punishment of children is frowned upon in Mapuche communities.³⁹

In summary, we may list the most important Mapuche child rearing norms as follows:

- The use of verbal and nonverbal codes by parents, who tend to teach, reinforce and perpetuate cultural values and traditions that will accompany the child throughout his or her life, in individual, family, and community contexts.
- Construction of a family environment where physical punishment and violence are rare, and where interaction is closely linked to direct verbal and nonverbal communication.
- Use of various cultural education mechanisms, especially by fathers and grandfathers, such as tales, stories and legends, or dreams; these configure something bigger, which is the development of counsel, through which the normative framework of the child's action is reproduced and socialized.
- Parents' dialogue with their children relates to concrete facts, which are repeated until the child learns them. Yet communication frequently involves learning through metaphor and fables, reproduced through the cultural mechanisms cited.
- Both parents are involved in raising children. The mother, however, is more devoted to this task, and her influence is greater because she spends more time with the children; the father will convey knowledge and judge conduct. The enculturation process is also shared with other family members—particularly the father's relatives—as a result of the child's involvement at an early age in all family and community activities. During this process, the child learns essentially by observing and imitating his or her parents' activities.
- Discipline is flexible but firm, consistent with the child's pace of learning, in teaching the collective tasks and occupations of each sex. Children "play while working" and "work while playing," and at play perform tasks that imply responsibility and cultural continuity. This "working play" reveals gender and age differences in children, bringing them to identify themselves with specific parental roles accepted by the peer group. At the same time, the child is introduced to the idea of adult authority and, consequently, to the notion

³⁹ *Historia de los pueblos indígenas* (1998). JUNJI.

that there are rules of the game that take precedence over everything else. They know, then, that they must assume specific functions.⁴⁰

Mapuche children seem to be subjected to an enculturation process at an early age. This, however, does not mean that in the course of their life they will not incorporate patterns and guidelines of behavior distinct from their own culture, given the strong forces of acculturation to which the Mapuche people are now exposed.

1.7. The Origins of the Rukantun⁴¹ Kindergarten and the Mahuidache School

The Rukantun kindergarten operates in the same premises and facilities as the Mahuidache school no. 147. It belongs to the National Board of Early Childhood Education (JUNJI) and uses the JUNJI methodology, known as the "Alternative education program for indigenous communities,"⁴² with the support and supervision of the local technical team of the Araucania Regional Directorate, comprising three professionals: an early childhood educator, social worker, and nutritionist. An intercultural advisor, who is a professional preschool teacher, assists the team throughout the year.

The school is a subsidized private institution supervised by the Municipal Education Department (DEM) of the Freire Commune. Both institutions are located in the indigenous community of Francisco Huenchunir, which is part of the Mahuidache Community.

The premises occupied by the kindergarten and school were built in the 1970s, as meeting rooms for the local sugar beet growers' association. They were later earmarked for use as a school to meet the education needs of the growers' children; the kindergarten and school occupy three buildings of modest size. The first, made of wood, has 60 m² of floor area at most, with a front hallway that measures 3m in width; it houses the kindergarten and school principal's office. The second building, of better construction, has two classrooms for the first and second cycles, in which it accommodates more than 50 students between the ages of six and 13. The third, larger building, newer and of good construction, houses the school kitchen and dining hall. The rest of the property consists of a patio, a dirt football field (which is very muddy when it rains), and a greenhouse that is used to grow medicinal herbs. The bathrooms for both institutions are in a separate, makeshift structure. The children must brave bad weather to reach this facility, which has no roof and is open to the rain, a nuisance in an area with steady rainfall during much of the year.

The kindergarten has teaching and other materials (Lego sets, paper, play-doh, peg boards, painting sets, puzzles) as well as some culturally relevant materials such as Mapuche dolls contributed by the JUNJI. The school, for its part, has a library, textbooks, learning games and audiovisual equipment. In 2007, a teacher at the school received an interactive CD, called "Heron Carmela and the family of goslings" (available at www.enlaces.cl), from the Proyecto de Enlaces ("Liaison Project"), in which the creatures teach children the Mapudungun language, starting with the basics such as greetings. This interactive device also encourages reading comprehension, and tells a story that relates directly to Mapuche roots.

⁴⁰ Caro, A. (1997). "Pautas de Crianza en familias mapuches rurales de la IX Región. Temuco, Chile", in Nogueira, F. & Monteiro J. *Confronto de culturas: Conquista, resistencia, transformacao*. São Paulo: Editora da Universidade de São Paulo

⁴¹ *Ruka kantun*: "Playing out home life."

⁴² This is an education program that provides daily care to children from age 2 until they enter general basic education, in differentiated classes, providing comprehensive care that includes education, food and social support. It operates under the responsibility of a preschool education expert or a person trained for this function if no one is available locally. Volunteer mothers participate in classroom activities and in workshops, where they enhance their commitment to and their expertise at educational work with their children.

In 2008, the kindergarten had an enrollment of 14 children (seven girls and seven boys) between the ages of three and six; enrollment increased by two girls in 2009. The school offers classes up to the sixth year of general basic education, and has 55 students, 27 of whom are in the first cycle (grades 1, 2 and 3), and 28 in the second (grades 4, 5 and 6). All children attending the school are between the ages of six and 13. Around 90% of them are Mapuche, according to the principal. The children in the kindergarten belong to 11 families in the community.

In 1998 the school began operating under the Full School Day regime. This new organization of time meant that the students had to be fed—a service provided by the National School Assistance and Scholarships Board (JUNAEB). There are other services available as well, such as the school health program, the school tools program, integration programs, a learning reinforcement program, an environment program, and an extracurricular education program. There is also support from the CONADI⁴³ "Origins Program" (cultural training and materials support).

The kindergarten and the school define themselves as open to the community, with which they maintain a close relationship. In fact, a member of the indigenous community serves as cultural advisor and conducts workshops on indigenous handicrafts and traditions in both institutions. The relationship is further reinforced by a number of activities: for example, celebration of the Mapuche new year, gymnastic presentations, and the marking of All Saints Day (November 1). As Helvia (the kindergarten's "auntie" or headmistress) puts it, *"when we hold activities to mark important dates, the institution is always open to the community... so that anybody can come to see what the children are learning and doing. The community too is open and accessible for any question the school or kindergarten may have."* The closeness of the relationship is exemplified by the fact that the kindergarten and school allow use of their facilities for community meetings.

The kindergarten has a preschool instructor as well as a food handler, both of Mapuche origin; the school, for its part, has a principal (who also teaches) and two teachers (one male and one female), a food handler, and service assistant. All staff members are from the region. One teacher, the preschool assistant, food handler and service assistant are members of the indigenous group and speak its language. The teachers are between 23 and 52 years of age, and have between seven and 15 years of experience. The school principal has spent his entire teaching career at the school.

Attendance rates in the kindergarten and school are high, at 90% and 85%, respectively. The youngsters are ferried from and to their homes by a special van.

The kindergarten was created at the initiative of parents. It initially operated in the chapel, where a community "auntie" looked after the children. Over time, as the JUNJI approach was introduced, the kindergarten took on a preschool technical expert and began the "Know Your Child" program.⁴⁴ Later, parents began to send their children to the school as observers, and the school finally organized the kindergarten in its own premises.

The kindergarten curriculum, according to headmistress Helvia Villegas, is *designed to rescue the children's own culture, and is planned to include knowledge about culture, the family, animals and "everything that has to do with Mapuche culture", although the children do not necessarily have to speak the Mapuche language.*

⁴³ CONADI: Consejo Nacional de Desarrollo Indígena.

⁴⁴ The "Know Your Child" program was launched to meet the needs of rural children under 6 who had no access to kindergarten or other facilities. To run the program a mother is trained as a monitor to work with other mothers, providing them the tools and knowledge they need as their children's prime educator. See Familia, Escuela Rural. Unidad de Educación Parvularia. División Educación General. Serie Educación Parvularia 2000: Aportes a la reflexión y a la Acción, Ministerio de Educación, Chile, 1999

Leila Quintranao, the teacher for the first cycle in the school and a former student of the school, holds workshops for Mapuche fathers and mothers, with support from the CONADI Origins Program.

According to the school principal, Joel Beltran, *"the children have their culture impregnated, all we have to do is value it and tell them, this is important, it's just as important as other cultures that are taught, the medieval one for instance ... Let's start by understanding what we have, the culture of our grandparents... we must value our culture... it must be cross-cutting... permanent... from the time the bell rings until we leave. Our teachers have relations with the most important people in the community... the children appreciate this and note the interest in their culture. When we take part in religious ceremonies such as rituals or funerals... we show respect for those ceremonies."*

2. Early Childhood Transitions as Experienced by the Child, the Family and the Community

2.1. The Meaning of Kindergarten

According to perceptions reported by children, their parents and relatives, as well as by education agents and other players in the education community, kindergarten can have five different meanings, depending on the interviewee's position.

a) Educational meaning:

There is clear mention of the educational role of kindergarten:

"Studying insects, drawing, playing, sharing" (Fidel, age 4).

"Playing, drawing, doing things, learning letters" (Belén, age 6).

"So they can be prepared to go to school" (mother of Belén).

"Well, it helps kids prepare themselves so when they get to primary school they stand out, they know more."

"What they learn in kindergarten is terrific. I see that he's learned a lot—drawing, writing, knowing how to write his name" (father of Benjamin, age 5).

"They get new ideas, they learn new things, they can sing in Mapuche." (Mother of Geral).

"It helped her a lot—she couldn't speak very well, she learned everything there, in the first year she already knew how to write because she had had a year in kindergarten, beginning with grade 3, 4, 5 and 6, and she knew everything." (Mother of Camila).

b) Formative meaning:

Second, we can identify a formative meaning in terms of personality development, involving "learning rules and regulations, achieving independence and autonomy, being disciplined, meaning having good school work habits, being on time, respecting limits, internalizing rights and duties." All of this is essential to conducting oneself properly and assertively in life:

"Knowing the rules of the school" (father of Geral, age 6).

"He learned a lot—to be more dependent, as kids are more attached to their mother, it helped him to go to kindergarten early" (Mother of Benjamin, age 5).

"They make progress, they develop more like persons" (mother of Fidel, age 4).

"Learning how to socialize themselves, we know that children have to share not only with the people around them, but also with people outside the home, because there are other environments." (Mother of Monica).

c) Leisure time for the mothers:

A third meaning, expressed especially by mothers, is that kindergarten leaves them with free time to do housework and even to "relax," obviously a significant aspect in family relations, and something that will leave the mother in a better emotional state to welcome the rest of the family home from school or work.

"It helps me to, because I can relax (she laughs)... it helps me a lot, when you have so much to do and when you have kids you can't get things done, now I can do what I want, I can go to work – I take her to school at 9 and I pick her up again at 2, it's great!" (Mother of Camila).

d) Saving recruitment and preparation work for the principal and teachers:

The fourth meaning identified during the interviews is the function of "recruiting" children for the school, and saving the preparatory work that would be needed if children had not been through kindergarten. Now that the countryside near the cities is not as abandoned as it was, and there are various free bus services that take children to and from their home, schools have to compete for students and assure the parents that they will succeed. The principal of the Mahuidache school described this in very graphic terms:

"Well, in practice, to be very honest, this is a kind of nursery that produces students for the school, I cannot deny it, from the pedagogical viewpoint and training of the children, this prepares them for basic education. In the past we had no kindergarten, and the preparatory work had to be done in the first year of primary school, lasting until May or June, and sometimes for the whole year. The kindergarten has lightened our workload tremendously." (Principal)

A similar opinion was offered by a primary school teacher:

"We see the difference in the school—between the kids who went to kindergarten and those who did not. It's fundamental—if there were no kindergarten it would take a whole year to bring them up to speed." (School teacher)

e) Child's play

The fifth and final meaning expressed by those interviewed has to do with the chance for play that kindergarten gives the children. Although this may appear something very simple at first sight, it has profound meaning for child development—all child development theorists agree that the principal activity of a child is to play, and this is particularly important among groups like the Mahuidache where houses are not so close together as in the city, and there is no real "neighborhood" relationship that allows children to play with others or as a group. The kindergarten also gives children the chance to play and experiment with materials that they could not otherwise get their hands on, and this broadens the range of stimuli and experiences that are particularly meaningful for Mapuche children's cognitive, emotional and social development.

Interestingly, no one interviewed made any mention, in assessing the value of the kindergarten or the school, of the comprehensive care received, including meals. By contrast, this factor is frequently cited in interviews with kindergarten parents in low-income urban areas.

As a specific comment relating to the central topic of this study, i.e. transitions, we may note that

parents and teachers see kindergarten as a fundamental element of the transition between the home and school. It would seem that meeting the demands of the school requires something more than parents who are well disposed to educating their children by teaching them numbers, letters and the elements of daily life within the family relationship, and something more than the child-rearing norms of the Mapuche culture—"learning by doing," "playing while working," and "working while playing"—and that in fact a passage through this "transition" space is now necessary to proceed unobstructed through the educational process. Yet this raises a doubt: is it possible that the first year of primary school has been made too "academic," and that the shift from family and preschool "forms" to those of the school entails too great a methodological leap, leaving children and their parents caught between two systems that do not engage in the "conversations" needed to articulate the move from one level to the other?

2.2. Pros and Cons of Kindergarten

Positive aspects:

- The fact that the community is small and that in many cases children will be going to the same kindergarten that their brothers and sisters attended, or are familiar with the school because they had accompanied their mothers there for meetings or registration formalities. In addition, the school makes its premises available for community meetings, making families comfortable with them.
- The physical proximity of the kindergarten and school, sharing the same premises, facilitates children's access to both institutions. It becomes "known terrain" and a recognized educational space.
- The ability to take the bus to and from kindergarten, together with siblings and friends, is a great plus for parents in making their decision.
- Even though this was not specifically cited in the interviews, we may assume that things are made easier for families by the fact that the children are fed at kindergarten and remain there until 2 p.m., allowing parents to devote themselves to their work without interruption, as well as reducing the family food budget significantly.
- With respect to transitions from home, the preschool headmistress is aware of families' concerns and accordingly takes them on a familiarization tour before they enter the kindergarten, showing them the activities room, the bathrooms and main school rooms, allowing them to play with the toys. In the case of children who already have brothers or sisters enrolled in the kindergarten, and who may come with their mothers to bring them home, they have the opportunity to see how the kindergarten works and to interact with the preschoolers.
- When children enter the kindergarten for the first time, their mothers will stay there for a day or two or three to provide them comfort and reassurance and help them adapt to their new situation.

Negative aspects

- The kindergarten's facilities. The classroom itself is very small and there is no other covered space, apart from the entry hall, where children can play in case of rain.
- The bathrooms are in poor condition, and children have to go outside to reach them.

"I checked things out this morning, and I think this school is short of toilets. Those toilets have been there for a long time, and I think the school should really do something about it." (Parent)

- The playground is an uneven dirt field. It has not been possible to obtain funding (from any of the potential sources) to improve infrastructure or at least its exterior. Parents who have had children in other kindergartens make unfavorable comparisons:

"I don't like this kindergarten, because my child has very little room to share, the kids take up the entire space" (Jessica, mother).

"In the other place they had equipment, there were swings, there were lots of rooms—here we are in the sticks. You can see the difference in classrooms, the toys and also..." (Jenny, mother of Constanza, age 3).

- The reduced space also affects the motivation of the headmistress and constrains the range of activities available to children. She explained that she does not organize "corner games" (*juego de rincones*) because there is no space (although this is not necessarily true).
- The kindergarten headmistress has no training in preschool motivation methods. Activities are highly academic, which would explain the positive comments about the contribution kindergarten makes to preparing children for school. We note that, although she is of indigenous origin, she does not apply the standards of her own culture to kindergarten activities, as other Mapuche or Pehuenche teachers do.
- There is no formal articulation for the transition between kindergarten and the first year of primary school. The principal shows no concern and says nothing about this point. The teachers themselves seem to worry about it quietly, but admit that they have not much time to do anything about it alone. This says something about the way the teaching work is organized, and must surely affect transitions between the higher levels as well.

"I have a great relationship with the "auntie," but there's not much time, everybody sticks to his schedule, we make suggestions, the great thing about the kindergarten is that it has a lot of materials, in contrast to us. I suddenly feel like there is a big leap from kindergarten to my first-grade class—I don't have many things that the children can touch. They lose out with me ... I have a pencil, a notebook and such things because the auntie lends them to me, she's very nice and I help her to make sure that the shift is not so sharp." (First-grade teacher)

- Parents are told little about how their children are doing. The kindergarten headmistress said she would like to use a notebook or report card for the family, but she has not done so. There is a degree of inertia involved.
- The kindergarten headmistress shows little motivation or capacity and seems insecure in dealing with the problems of incorporating new children, who have some difficulty in adapting swiftly to the transition from home. She said she didn't like to see a child cry, because of what the other mothers would think.
- The kindergarten headmistress has little empathy and expresses little affection for the children, which may make her relationship with them more difficult, especially the new ones who need a warm welcome, especially when their mothers (as we observed among the Mapuche) are caring and affectionate with their children while they are at home.

2.3. Expectations of the Kindergarten

According to the teachers in the school, there are great expectations of the kindergarten as a space

for reinforcing the Mapuche identity. Yet this was not obvious in the kindergarten's décor or in the kinds of activities and the games or music offered, even though the headmistress told us that *the curriculum is designed to rescue the children's own culture, and is planned to include knowledge about culture, the family, animals and "everything that has to do with Mapuche culture", although the children do not necessarily have to speak the Mapuche language.*

One mother, however, begged to differ:

"They recently brought in a kultrun and some instruments [into the kindergarten and the school], but there's more Chilean than Mapuche culture here... we can't draw a parallel, every Mapuche has his or her own identity, and all they have to do is share it." (Jessica, adoptive mother of Monica).

The main expectation on the part of most parents is that the kindergarten will help their children get into the school and thereby make for continuity in the education process.

Some parents are also hoping for improvements in the kindergarten's infrastructure and other features, but this does not seem to be a great concern generally.

"There's a lot to be done. I would like to see a computer and they don't have one, and that's very important, because the day they start work that's the first thing they'll be asked about.... Notebooks, so they can do more work at home. They need their student tools so they can work and do their assignments." (Frida, mother of Fidel)

The mothers in particular have a real concern for their children's education. Some were very clear about their theory of education, which begins with the kindergarten, but not before the age of three, because keeping the children with them is a personal choice, and they have clear expectations in this respect. What they want above all is a quality education so that children can succeed after they leave Mahuidache, and they spare no effort to achieve this. In many cases, this attitude derives from their own experience, where their parents did not provide sufficient conditions or support to continue their studies.

The kindergarten headmistress expressed no comments or expectations about the need for better qualifications or the identification of training needs

2.4. The Meaning of the School

In Chile, the school has traditionally figured prominently in the national psyche. Chile made basic education compulsory long ago, and few parents will deny that their primary obligation is to give their children a good education. There is no doubt that the school represents the possibility for the future, for all.

As was clear from the interviews, what interested kindergarten parents most was to ready their children to enter school, as a way to open doors for them in their future life.

"The school is essential... I remember when I was little, some kids in grade 1 were eight or nine years old, and there was little hope that they would go on to university... they spent the rest of their time here and they had no chance to study beyond grade 6. But nowadays every family knows that the only way for its children to move ahead is to put them through school and give them an education. I believe that families are making a conscious decision to do so, because there is so little 'countryside' and no place to work." (School teacher)

In rural areas much has been done to bring schooling closer to children, especially those from

indigenous communities, recognizing that education is one of the most effective tools for overcoming poverty, inequity and discrimination.

The school has meaning primarily as a place for acquiring knowledge and making progress through an education "career" that is ever longer and sets ever more distant goals. Yet the school has other meanings that parents and teachers alike sometimes lose sight of: these include learning to learn, in the broad sense, both in terms of developing cognitive aspects and socializing among peers; learning to relate with others, to accept differences, to overcome difficulties; and to establish relations of friendship and recognize that not everyone has to be a friend, i.e. to establish and respect distances and differences, to become an integral and integrated person.

The school thus involves many transitions, and the experience of the early transitions can give a positive or negative shape to future ones, including those that go beyond the realm of the school itself and extend throughout life.

2.5. Pros and Cons of the School

Positive aspects

- The school is close to the children's homes and transportation is available.
- Comprehensive care is available, including food and healthcare.
- The teachers are young, professionally qualified, interested in education and in fostering interculturalism.
- The teachers are respectful of the Mapuche culture, and some of them belong to the Mapuche ethnic group.
- Despite poor physical conditions and infrastructure and multigrade classes, class sizes are small enough to allow personalized interaction between students and teacher.
- Extracurricular activities are offered: there is currently a theater workshop (run by the principal) with three students, and another person offers a workshop in guitar, singing and folklore ballet.

Negative aspects:

- Despite the school's recent age, facilities are in poor condition. It is difficult to understand why more has not been done with the authorities to build a usable playing field.
- Nor is there any excuse, given the various funding sources (Ministry of Education, CONADI, and others) for the school not to have bathrooms that can be reached and used on rainy days without getting wet.
- There is no coordination of work among teachers in terms of establishing a learning community and achieving common goals such as articulation and transition among different levels.
- The primary school teacher complains of a lack of materials to facilitate the process of integration into basic education.
- The first grade is excessively academic (using the workbook, pencil and eraser method).

2.6. Expectations with Respect to the School

Although expectations of the school and of education in general are high and rising, this is not

reflected in the quality of education offered by some institutions, which is bound to frustrate the hopes of students as to what they can achieve after they complete their studies there.

However, some parents are fully aware of what is needed and how to get it, however hard that may be.

"Of course, first we have to see how the school is doing, and then how to improve it. You can't just plunk a child anywhere; after all, they are not all the same. I would like to see a school that makes demands. I don't want to see the kids call each other names. Let the kids run wild and have the teachers do nothing? That's not good."

"The principal needs to place demands on the children..."

"It needs a firm hand, for there are some kids who receive no discipline. The first thing is to get to know the principal. In Camila's case, we know the principal and she's very demanding. We went to speak with her; she said the children who graduate will go on to university. She also said that she doesn't accept just any one, she wants children who are diligent, not lazy, not thieves, who don't call each other names." (Camila's mother)

"The boy went to Pitruquen alone. That's what his father decided. It was tough to send him so far. That's just as far as Temuco or Quepe. He would come home on Friday and leave on Monday. He got as far as grade 8 and no further, because it was an elementary school. After intermediate school we sent him to Temuco, he could make the trip because he's a big boy. He's now in the fourth year of high school. He repeated a year. He's studying industrial mechanics, he wants to work a bit and then continue studying, perhaps in Inacap, to become more professional." (Mother of Camila and Danilo)

Several parents interviewed are hoping that their children will continue their studies, and it doesn't matter whether they have to go to some more distant place to do that. This shows the value attached to education among rural and indigenous people, and the importance of investing in areas where motivation is high.

As for the students, a survey conducted by the teachers showed that their greatest hope was to have a gymnasium built.

3. Conclusions

The study conducted in Mahuidache revealed some interesting aspects of the community, its residents, families, and the daily life that goes on between the woods and fields bordering the river.

The most significant result, perhaps, was to collect the thoughts and views of children, their families and teachers about day-to-day school life and the ups and downs of their lives, focusing on the transition processes in which the children interviewed have been involved.

- Some authors⁴⁵ suggest that the transition between different spaces is a process and not an event, and that these are moreover processes that are socially constructed, meaning that they can be planned and therefore guided and structured. Our first conclusion, then, is that these transitions should never be left to chance, especially if, as in our case study, they are such significant moments as the move from the private, intimate setting of the family to a public, shared place

⁴⁵ Ferguson & Jones, quoted by Shea, Th, & Bauer, A. M. *Educación especial: un enfoque ecológico*. Ed. Mc.Graw-Hill, Mexico, 2000, in *Transiciones Educativas en Educación parvularia*. Módulo de autocapacitación para las comunidades de aprendizaje, 11, JUNJI, 2008.

such as the kindergarten, and *a fortiori* to the school, which significantly increases the number of stakeholders.

- At some point in the report it was noted that many of the concerns that must be taken into account with moves from one place to another have to do with the fact that these initial experiences significantly affect other transitions to which the children we got to know in this study will undoubtedly be exposed.

In this respect, we came to appreciate that Mapuche culture frowns upon separating children too early from their family group or from contact with their mother, and that, as a child rearing norm, the preference is to keep them at home for perhaps three years, gradually introducing them to domestic chores and field work where they will learn the pattern of "playing while working" and "working while playing."

- Again in relation to this particular form of caring for *chiquititos* ("little ones" as their mothers call them), the study reveals some Mapuche-specific cultural elements and child-rearing norms that are important to understand and keep in mind, which would facilitate transition to kindergarten.
- Another consideration that emerges from the study is to be more faithful to the name of the kindergarten, Rukantun, which means "acting out home life", and to equip the kindergarten with elements of daily family life through "corner games" and similar activities that newly enrolled children can identify with. While there is a general concern to preserve the Mapuche culture and promote the indigenous identity of children attending the kindergarten, that concern is not evident at first glance in the classroom.
- The study also revealed the need to make greater contact with families, recognizing that when children are conveyed by school bus the relationship with the family is more remote. Indeed, the headmistress made this point specifically, and she considered such contact essential for the parents and herself as well.
- When it comes to the move from the kindergarten to the school, the study showed a willingness on the part of the persons responsible at both levels to articulate the transition in the best way possible for the children, but there is no formal time reserved for preparing and accomplishing this, revealing the failure of articulation in the way the teaching team organizes its work.

4. Lessons Learned From and For Education Policy

- It is essential to support early transition processes through clear guidance and training for teachers so that they can apply suitable procedures at specific moments. This presupposes inter-institutional coordination in establishing rules and guidelines for preparing a policy in this respect, and taking concrete and relevant action.
- The interest shown by parents in the education of their children and their demonstrated capacity to take action along these lines suggest the need to strengthen the family's role as an education agent, creating or reinforcing ongoing articulation between the family and the kindergarten.
- There needs to be greater articulation of the work of teachers operating within the same educational space, in order to make that work more efficient, bolster training and the exchange of knowledge, encourage thinking about practice, and produce new knowledge through such thinking.
- Policy in this area needs to consider ways to motivate teachers working in remote areas to take refresher courses to help them perform their work satisfactorily.

- Without intercultural education agents who can work effectively in the local language and culture, it is difficult to pursue the objective of strengthening the indigenous identity of children in kindergartens or schools established in indigenous communities, or to strengthen bilingual learning.
- It is not enough to have children from the kindergarten visit and become familiar with the school and its classrooms, because it is the move from one methodology to the other that is the point of rupture in the transition. Efforts to smooth the transition must be directed at revising the methodologies used in the first grade and seeking more subtle ways of incorporating the "workbook, pencil and eraser" methodology, encouraging the use of more suitable materials for working with first grade children.

Bibliography

- Aguirre, Á. (1995). *Etnografía. Metodología cualitativa en la investigación sociocultural*. Barcelona: Alfaomega Marcombo.
- Bengoa, J. (1992). *Historia del pueblo mapuche. Siglo XIX y XX*. Santiago, Chile: Ediciones Sur. Colección Estudios Históricos.
- Bengoa, J. (1996). *Población, familia y migración mapuche. Los impactos de la modernización en la sociedad mapuche*. *Revista Pentukun*, 6. Temuco: Instituto de Estudios Indígenas, Universidad de Frontera.
- Caro, A. (1997). "Pautas de Crianza en familias mapuches rurales de la IX Región. Temuco, Chile", in Nogueira, Francisca & Monteiro, *Confronto de culturas: Conquista, resistencia, transformação*. São Paulo: Editora da Universidade de São Paulo.
- Cofre, M. I. (2008). *Sistematización del Taller Pautas de Crianza Mapuche. Protección de Derechos de la Infancia y Adolescencia Mapuche N2*. Temuco: UNICEF, SERPLAC de la Araucanía.
- Hammersley, M. & Atkinson, P. (1994). *Etnografía: Métodos de investigación*. 2ª Edición revisada y ampliada. Barcelona: Paidós Básica.
- JUJI (1998). *Historia de los pueblos indígenas en Chile. Mitos y Tradiciones*. Santiago, Chile: JUNJI.
- JUNJI (2008). *Transiciones educativas en Educación Parvularia. Módulo de autocapacitación para las comunidades de aprendizaje. Contenidos y orientaciones metodológicas. Módulo 11*. Santiago, Chile: JUNJI.
- Fosis (2006). *Pautas de Crianza Mapuche. Estudio "Significaciones, actitudes y prácticas de familias mapuche en relación a la crianza y cuidado infantil de los niños y niñas desde la gestación hasta los cinco años"*. Cieg, Facultad de Ciencias Sociales, Universidad de Chile y Ciges, Departamento de Salud Pública, Universidad de La Frontera.
- Ferguson & Jones (2008). *Educación especial: un enfoque ecológico*. In Shea, Th. & Bauer, A. M. (2000). *Transiciones Educativas en Educación parvularia. Módulo de autocapacitación para las comunidades de aprendizaje*. México: Mc Graw-Hill.
- Greve, M. E. (1998). *Culturas indígenas de Chile: un estudio preliminar*. Santiago, Chile: Pehuen.
- Hammersley, M. & Atkinson, P. (1983/1994). *Etnografía: Métodos de Investigación*. 2a Edición revisada y ampliada. Barcelona: Paidós Básica.
- Huenchal, E. (2008). *Capacidad Técnico Pedagógica en Educación Parvularia Intercultural Urbana*. Santiago, Chile: CONADI, Universidad Humanismo Cristiano.
- MINEDUC (1999). *Familia, Escuela Rural. Unidad de Educación Parvularia. División Educación General. Serie Educación Parvularia 2000: Aportes a la reflexión y a la Acción*. Santiago, Chile: MINEDUC.
- Luna, L. (2007). *Un mundo entre dos mundos*. Santiago, Chile: Ediciones Universidad Católica de Chile.
- CONADI (2008). *Perfil sociolingüístico de comunidades mapuche de la VIII, IX y X Región*. Santiago, Chile: Universidad Técnica Metropolitana.

- Fundación Integra, Fosis (2006). Sistematización del Programa Veranadas Comuna de Lonquimay. Santiago, Chile: Fundación Integra, Fosis.
- Taylor & Bogan (1986/1992). Introducción a los métodos cualitativos. Buenos Aires: Paidós.
- Vera, R., Aylwin, J., Coñuecar, A. & Chihualaf, E. (2004). El despertar del pueblo mapuche. Nuevos conflictos, viejas demandas. Santiago, Chile: LOM Ediciones.
- Villarroel, G. & Sánchez, X. (2002). Relación Familia y Escuela: un estudio comparativo en la ruralidad. Facultad de Ciencias de la Educación. Universidad de Playa Ancha de Ciencias de la Educación. Valdivia: Estudios Pedagógicos.
- Taylor & Bogdam (1986). Introducción a los métodos cualitativos de investigación. Buenos Aires: Paidós.

Chapter IV. PERU CASE STUDY

TEORÍA NATIVE COMMUNITY OF THE ASHÁNINKA ETHNIC GROUP

Report Presented By:

Regina Moromizato (Coordinator)

Team of Communicators (Acción por los niños NGO):

María Teresa Mosquera

Consuelo Ramos

Support Team:

Liliana Cárdenas

Susana Reátegui

Introduction . 1. Conceptual Approximations to the Central Topic of the Case Study: Educational Transitions. 2. Context, Scenarios and Players. 2.1. Location. 2.2. History of the Asháninka Communities. 2.3. The Family Setting in the Teoría Native Community. 2.3.1. Social, Economic and Cultural Characteristics. 2.3.2. Roles and Interactions in Child-Rearing. 2.3.3. The Child-Rearing Role of Grandparents and Older Siblings. 2.3.4. Children's Involvement in Family Activities. 2.3.5. The Family's View of Education for its Youngest Members. 2.3.6. The Asháninka Child and His or Her First Days in School or Kindergarten. 2.4. Education Programs in the Teoría Native Community. 2.4.1. Childcare and Education Programs. 2.4.2. The Dominant Educational Methodology. 3. A Look at Educational Transitions in the Teoría Native Community. 3.1. Children's Academic Learning in the Teoría Native Community. 3.2. Some Considerations About "Successful" Outcomes. 3.2.1. Internal Factors for Success. 3.2.2. External Factors for Success. 4. Conclusions from the Study. 5. Lessons Learned and Recommendations for Education Policy. Bibliography.

Introduction

The Peruvian research team decided to conduct its case study among the **children of the Teoría Native Community**, of the Asháninka ethnic group in the *Selva Central* (Central Jungle). The study is a qualitative one of the horizontal exploratory-descriptive type, with an interpretative focus. The information was collected using qualitative techniques (observation of events, in-depth interviews, projectional techniques), which allowed us to characterize and understand (within limits) the dimensions and variables selected for the study.

According to the residents themselves, the Teoría Native Community dates back to 1940 when the first inhabitant arrived: this was Mr. Quinchoker, who with his family fled the measles epidemic that was devastating communities along the banks of the Ene River. Finding himself alone and isolated with his family, he extended an invitation to other families to join him, including some persons who had been accused of witchcraft and were outcasts in their communities. Together, they began to populate "Tiori," so-called for the great number of birds of that name that lived in this area some years ago.

Over the years, Tiori (as it was originally called) achieved title to its lands, under the agrarian policy. It was at that time that the land registry officials Hispanicized the community's name to "Teoría."

With the passage of time, the community's founder fell ill and as the local healers could do nothing for him he was taken, with the help of missionaries, to the city of Tarma where he was cured. Upon his return home he shared his experience with his family and friends, attributing his cure to the God of the evangelicals, and called on the community to adopt that religion and to believe in a curing and saving God. Consequently, most of the population now professes this religion.

During the time of political turmoil, the community's strategic location, and the formation of "peasant patrols" (*rondas campesinas*) supported by the army command allowed it to keep the Shining Path terrorist group (*Sendero Luminoso*) at bay and to escape attack. In fact, although the terrorists were in the vicinity of the community, the inhabitants took refuge in the forest and the "peasant patrol" provided protection and defense.

1. Conceptual Approximations to the Central Topic of the Case Study: Educational Transitions

In general terms, the project defines "transitions" as critical moments of change that children experience in moving from one setting to another, treating those changes as opportunities for development and learning, in which the conflicts sparked by the change can or should open opportunities for enrichment (Sacristan, 1997; Bennett, 2006). These are opportunities to benefit from stimuli and "cultural capital" that will offer further opportunities to "grow," provided that conditions are favorable for these transitions to occur satisfactorily.

The definition of transitions in the context of this project seeks to specify the qualification of "successful" on the basis of indicators related to children's entry and retention in the education system, which should impact favorably on learning in the cognitive, emotional and physical dimensions, and will

equip children with the tools to integrate themselves and adapt readily to changing spaces throughout their lives.⁴⁶

These initial ideas about educational transitions and what makes them "successful" will serve as the conceptual pillars for analyzing and understanding the findings of this study.

2. Context, Scenarios and Players

2.1. Location

The Junín region embraces two of the three provinces that make up the *Selva Central* of Peru: Chanchamayo and Satipo. Its territory is crossed by the Central Cordillera of the Peruvian Andes, the structure of which gives this region both Andean and Amazonian zones, making the department a place attractive for its ecological, geographic and cultural diversity.

It covers an area of 44,197.23 km² and has more than 1,100,000 inhabitants: 56% of the population lives in the Amazonian zone, and 44% in the Andean zone. Its capital is the city of Huancayo, located in the central Andes at an altitude of 3,249m, and a distance of 298 km from Lima (a six-hour bus trip).

The Amazonian zone lies on the eastern side of this region and contains abundant rivers, deep forests, waterfalls and canyons that create a magical and mysterious panorama; it is 632m above sea level. The temperature varies between 22° and 30°C.; its main economic activity is agriculture, and the most important products are cocoa and coffee.



The provinces of Satipo and Chanchamayo are home to 196 native Amazonian communities of the Asháninka, Notmashiguenga and Kakinte ethnic groups.

⁴⁶ The report from the Washington meeting (December 2007), addressing the question "what is transition?", notes that the variables to be taken into account in defining transition relate to keeping the child in the education system, avoiding school failure, evaluating learning achievements, and promoting a process that is satisfactory for the child.

Of these three, the Asháninka constitute the most numerous ethnic group in the central jungle, where they live along the rivers Ene and Perene. They number 524,612 persons,⁴⁷ representing 21.89% of the total indigenous population (according to the census). These people are grouped in 208 communities along the rivers Ene, Perené, Bajo Apurímac, Alto Ucayali and Pichis, in the provinces of Satipo, Oxapampa, the mesa of the Gran Pajonal and Chanchamayo, in the departments of Junín, Loreto, Alto Ucayali and Madre de Dios.

The Asháninka belong to the Arawak linguistic family, and are recognized as an indigenous group by the 1974 Native Communities Act. The constitution of indigenous communities (article 8) defines a native community as a set of families linked by the following principal elements: language or dialect, cultural and social characteristics, occupancy and common, permanent use of the same land, with nuclear or dispersed settlements.⁴⁸

The Asháninka Teoría Native Community is the community selected for the study. It belongs geographically to the Llaylla district and is adjacent to the Mazamari district in the Province of Satipo, Department of Junín.⁴⁹ Because of its proximity and ready access to the capital of the Mazamari district, most of its people have decided to register in the district municipality of Mazamari. For this reason, the inhabitants of this community belong to that district for administrative purposes.

Access to the community is by road; from the capital, Lima, the trip takes around 12 hours.⁵⁰ The community's lands cover approximately 385 ha, and it is surrounded by two rivers: the Mazamari River, with warm waters, and the Teoría River, whose waters are cold and crystalline. The children spend much of their time by these rivers, playing between the swift-flowing currents and the forest's edge.

2.2. History of the Asháninka Communities

The history of the Asháninka communities is rife with episodes of invasion, colonization, terrorist incursions and missionary interventions. Tribute must be paid to the valor and the courage that this community has demonstrated over the years. It was traditionally considered as an ethnic group of warriors who from the times of the colonization rose up against their Spanish overlords, and who more recently through their peasant patrols have engaged in hand-to-hand combat against terrorism (the Shining Path).

During the 18th century the church and its missionaries penetrated the Amazon and, under the pretext of bringing Christianity, occupied indigenous lands and exploited indigenous labor to build great monasteries. Seen as invaders, the Amazonian indigenous groups (including the Asháninka) staged many uprisings to free themselves and retrieve their lands from the monasteries.⁵¹ During this time there emerged the figure of Juan Santos Atahualpa, who even today is revered by the Asháninka as the *Paba* or "God Liberator."⁵²

In 1845 Peru launched the first colonization drive into the central jungle, during the government of Castilla. The purpose of that drive was to appropriate large expanses of land and then turn them over

⁴⁷ Census 1993. Instituto de Estadística e Informática. Peru.

⁴⁸ Some Asháninka communities have within their territory enclaves of Andean peoples.

⁴⁹ There is currently a dispute over the territorial placement of the Teoría Native Community: negotiations are underway to assign it to the district of Mazamari, to which the population is registered because the district capital is more accessible and community services are provided by this municipality.

⁵⁰ From Lima, it is 10 hours by bus to the province of Satipo and from there it is another two hours or longer by collective transport to the community, over an unpaved road.

⁵¹ <http://www.satipo.com/index.html>

⁵² In the bilingual schools, history classes cover the myth of Juan Santos Atahualpa.

to the coffee companies. This set the pattern for further incursions, sponsored by the State, which took over more than 50,000 ha of land in disregard of native rights. All of this produced confrontations between Asháninka and colonists. The Asháninka retreated further into the jungle and into the highlands in search of more and better land.

With the dawn of the 20th century came the opening of the rubber era (1904). During the following years the Amazon lost its status as "*Terra incognita*" and fell under the sway of foreign industrial capitalism. During these years more than 50,000 natives died as a result of poor working conditions on the rubber plantations, where they were used as slaves.

The 1920s saw the beginnings of a national interest in indigenous communities, but this was confined to the Quechua-Aymara communities. More than 50 years would pass before Peru would finally recognize the Amazonian native communities, with the 1974 "Native Communities Act", which accepted their social, political and economic organization.

Beginning with that initiative, indigenous organizations sprang up, embracing various communities of the same ethnic group. Thus was born the CECONSEC (Federation of Native Communities of the Central Jungle), giving rise to other indigenous organizations founded on a watershed basis. The Satipo Valley has the OCAR organization (Organization of Asháninka Communities of Rio Negro).

Toward the end of 1987 these communities were invaded by *Senderista* militants, who killed thousands of Asháninka natives and seized their lands, forcing them once again to abandon their homes and go into hiding from the Shining Path and the MRTA (Tupac Amaru Revolutionary Movement).

This internal war lasted for some 20 years. During that time 6,000 men, women and children among the 55,000 members of these communities died,⁵³ 10,000 were forced to move to other lands (to escape *Senderista* attacks), and 5,000 were captured by the Shining Path and the MRTA. As a result of these displacements, 40 Asháninka communities disappeared.

In the face of these attacks, the only area of the central jungle that organized itself voluntarily was the Satipo zone. The Asháninka formed self-defense committees, which were replicated in other areas prone to terrorist invasions. Peace was finally restored to these communities during the 1990s, when they managed to reorganize and returned to their lands.

Coincident with the *Senderista* incursions, the 1990s also saw the beginning of illegal logging. This disrupted the ecological balance, affecting communities' production and food supply, driving away animals, and destroying livelihoods. This logging also meant that canoes were no longer build for river transport and there was a decline in the number of palm trees used as thatch to roof dwellings.

2.3. The Family Setting in the Teoría Native Community

2.3.1. Social, Economic and Cultural Characteristics

The Teoría Native Community has a total population of 420 inhabitants, of whom 167 (39.8%) are children under the age of eight. Of the 84 couples only five are formally married, and 80 have children under the age of eight; on average, families have five children. While there are no families headed by a woman, it is important to note that there are children in the community who live with and are cared for

⁵³ Many of these deaths were caused by anemia due to poor nutrition.

their grandparents, because their fathers have migrated to distant regions in search of work, or because of family breakup. People also tend to marry at an early age.

With respect to the level of education, among those parents with children eight years and younger 25 of them (15.63%), the majority women, have no schooling; 94 persons (58.75%) say they have attended some level of primary school, and only 41 of these (25.62%) went to high school: in other words, 43.6% (53 persons) have remained outside the education system. None of the parents has any higher education.

The main economic activity and occupation for community members is agriculture, primarily subsistence farming with a small production for market. The principal crops are plantain, yucca, corn, coffee, citrus and cocoa.

The predominant religion is evangelical.⁵⁴ Most of the population is bilingual; the mother tongue, Asháninka, is used mainly within the home.

The average family dwelling will have six or seven inhabitants. Houses are built of cane, with roofs of *humiro*⁵⁵ and dirt floors. In some cases adobe is used for the walls, reflecting the cultural mingling of Asháninka and mestizos. This community exhibits two types of dwelling, the first of which is composed of three or four huts made of cane or sticks, arranged in a U-form that offers a large patio. Each of these huts fulfills a function: one may be the kitchen, another the bedroom, and another will serve for receiving visitors, drinking *mazato*⁵⁶ and keeping the loom used for weaving the traditional *Kushma* garment.

The second type of dwelling consists of a single room that serves as kitchen, bedroom and social space. In general, we found such dwellings to be inhabited by older persons, suggesting that they may have been the typical dwelling in the Amazonian area.

Families that have hygiene facilities (silo type) place them outdoors behind the dwelling. Generally the dwellings have only one story, although some have sleeping lofts.

The dwellings have no electricity; this is available only at certain times in communal spaces such as the square or school. Water is supplied by pipes from small natural springs⁵⁷ and is stored in buckets or pots as a precaution against water shortages. Some residents now have cell phones, but signal reception is weak.

Organization and spaces for participation: the community is organized on the basis of committees, each of which have specific functions agreed at the communal assemblies, which are held every month or whenever an important decision has to be taken. These decisions are recorded in duly notarized minutes and have legal value.

The committees do not always operate very efficiently, however. For example, the water committee does not dose the water supply with chlorine as frequently as it should, and the community dining hall has operational problems. The reasons probably have to do with the occupations themselves, a failure to understand the importance of the function for the community's security and development, and a

⁵⁴ Religious groups of Christian origin identified with Protestant movements that emphasize evangelism.

⁵⁵ Name of a local plant, the leaves of which are used to make roofing.

⁵⁶ *Mazato* is a traditional beverage of the Amazonian indigenous communities prepared by fermenting yucca.

⁵⁷ *Puquiales*.

shortage of technical assistance from the institutions responsible for promoting and raising awareness about health, nutrition, and human development in general.

Yet despite these problems, the community's governing board exerts real leadership and decisions are taken in a democratic manner; these are important aspects of the cultural traditions of the Asháninka people.

The governing board takes part in meetings called by the municipality, which have resulted in construction of a health post, a community library (under an agreement with the "Children of the Amazon" Project) and improvements to kindergarten and school facilities.

2.3.2. Roles and Interactions in Child-Rearing

Child-rearing, as a set of actions and resources deployed by the family for the care and protection of its children, is the means or vehicle by which enculturation and socialization take place. It involves not only practices but also beliefs and rules established by the cultural group.

In the community covered by this case study, we observed that roles are delimited by gender, determining the tasks that will fall to each member of the family:

- *The woman* will spend long hours caring for the children and it is she who is responsible for training them in household tasks. She prepares the food, she weaves and dyes the cloth for garments, and she makes the baskets. When activity moves to the field (for growing and gathering fruits, vegetables or herbs), she will take her children with her to help in the work. If the children are very little she will leave them at home in the care of their older siblings, even if they themselves are quite young.

Girls begin to perform domestic tasks at a very early age. They help their mother to fetch water, to do the washing and cooking and to make necklaces or baskets to sell in the cities.

In some traditional families the girls will learn very early to spin cotton yarn and then to make their traditional garment (*Kushma*), considered a priority activity. In order to be a good spinner the girl must go through a preparation process that consists in abstaining from certain types of food such as *shapaja* (palm fruit), for it is believed that if she consumes fat this will accumulate in her body, making her idle and uninterested in spinning.

- *The role of the male* is to provide food, to protect the family, and to set the policy to be followed in the home (who is to go to school, how family resources will be distributed, etc.). It is his responsibility to teach his sons how to hunt, to fish and to sow so that in the future they can maintain the family. For the community, the "best catch" is the hardest-working man. The father is also concerned to teach his sons the values of the community, such as solidarity, sharing and responsibility.

The activities that fathers share with their sons, and mothers with their daughters, make for strong and solid emotional bonds. Through such behavior the community can assess the family unit and discern how sound it is. If the father is seen hunting or fishing with his sons and the mother stays home with her daughters, this will be taken by the community as a sign that the family is united.

2.3.3. The Child-Rearing Role of Grandparents and Older Siblings

Both the grandfather and grandmother play an important role in the upbringing of children. It is their task to pass on the "history" of the community, to see that customs are not lost and in this way to contribute to endo-acculturation. They advise the parents and grandchildren, and accompany them

through the stages of growth and physiological change. They are considered to embody the community's wisdom.

In the case of girls, they receive advice from their grandmothers on how to make better yarn, how to prepare yucca and how to be good women. The grandfathers teach the boys how to hunt and fish and how to be good men.

At bedtime the grandfather relates stories and anecdotes and passes on what he knows about curative plants or about hunting and fishing, or techniques for preparing products.

The older siblings help to care for the younger ones. They are especially useful to illiterate mothers when it comes to helping the children with their schoolwork, and they serve as immediate role models for the little ones as they make their educational transition (starting school)— what we shall call "assisted transition."⁵⁸

2.3.4. Children's Involvement in Family Activities

As the pace of family life is hectic, the only time during the day when all members can come together is at dinner. Families return to their houses and talk about the doings of the day, or they will recount some traditions, or perhaps advise the children and relate past experiences.

There are some productive activities in which the whole family participates. We saw children taking an active and responsible role in sowing and harvesting crops. They also participate in community activities, such as sporting events, cleanup campaigns and harvesting.

Many of the children's activities will depend on the season of the year. Between August and October they join in collecting wild fruits, snails, crickets or frogs, and they go hunting with their father. During the rainy season (January to March) the children make miniature bows and arrows.

At sowing and harvesting time, the children build little houses of wood, scaled to their size; between April and July they take part in the harvest and in preparing seeds. When it comes to planting beans and coffee, the children will strip the fruits from the plants.

Children's productive responsibilities do not prevent them from finding time to play. After class and after doing their chores the children will get together, without regard to sex or age, to go swimming in the river (their favorite activity), and then to play games (soccer for the boys, volleyball for the girls). And while they are helping their parents with domestic chores they will always find time and space for play.

We were interested to see how the children organize their games, without any adult intervention. In this way, the children acquire such skills as leadership, independence and decision-making at an early age.

2.3.5. The Family's View of Education for its Youngest Members

Families are very practical in what they expect from education. For them, "knowing nothing" means not knowing how to read or write properly and smoothly or not being able to keep track of accounts for the sale of products. Families see the kindergarten and the school as places where children

⁵⁸ Defined as the passage from one state to another, from one situation to another, that occurs with the intervention of a third person and that helps minimize the probability that the change will be traumatic for the children.

will learn these skills, while the things they need to know to survive and interrelate in this setting they will pick up at home.

Yet the families are not convinced that conditions in the schools will allow children to acquire this learning. They consider the teachers' methods to be too rigid and authoritarian. Nor is the infrastructure adequate: there are no educational materials, furnishings are dilapidated, and the local resources available are not used to help children learn.

While people see the value of educational institutions for their community's "progress," they complain that these are undermining their cultural identity. When the first school arrived in the 1950s, the Asháninka learned to read, write and speak Spanish: this opened opportunities to find work outside the community and to migrate to the cities, neglecting their community and adopting other lifestyles, i.e. they lost their customs and their identity. As one villager told us,

"Our identity no longer exists. With school we have adopted the identity of civilization. My children were born here but they live in the cities and they don't come to see me anymore. Many natives from here go off to live in the cities."

2.3.6. The Asháninka Child and His or Her First Days in School or Kindergarten

In the communities we visited, children's preparedness for school varies depending on their circumstances. As one community father told us,

"when my daughter was two and a bit, her mother said, you're going to go to kindergarten so that you can learn. The girl was very excited but she wanted new shoes and nice clothing. Then she was happy and she started to learn. We lived by the highway and she went off with the other students, and when school let out we had to go and pick her up."

In other communities, the first days of school are very difficult for the children. They have a lot of challenges to face, such as fear of being left in an unfamiliar place, missing their outdoor games, the farm, the river, the forest and everything that is important to them, not having money to buy all the materials they are supposed to have, the distance they must travel to kindergarten, and adjusting to the teacher (which is more difficult when she does not know the children's language or culture).

The parents say that families seldom try to prepare the children to go to school or kindergarten: they don't know how to prepare them and they don't know what to tell them.

"I have seen many children weeping and clinging to their mothers when they were about to be left at school on the first day. I have also seen younger kids coming in with their bigger brothers and sisters, and then they are not afraid to stay." (Bilingual teacher of Teoría)

While the concept of transition implies a move from one state to another, what is important is not whether children are reluctant to go to school on the first day but whether the school is sufficiently welcoming to make them want to stay there. This means that the support and coaching the children receive from their parents and siblings must be reinforced by the teacher, and the school must offer sufficiently good conditions to be an attractive place.⁵⁹

2.4. Education Programs in the Teoría Native Community

2.4.1. Childcare and Education Programs

⁵⁹ Moromizato, R (2007) "Buscando nuevos rumbos para mejores oportunidades", p. 63.

Coverage:

Teoría may be one of the few indigenous communities that offer services for children from six months of age through secondary school. This is bound to contribute to continuity in the care of children and to have a favorable impact on their development and learning.

Nevertheless, despite the available facilities (Wawa Wasi,⁶⁰ kindergarten, primary and secondary school), which should favor such continuity, local people have the perception that service is limited and not up to their expectations.

The community has a total of 67 children under the age of three, but enrolment coverage is very low: only 11 children are registered (according to the established standard, the average for Wawa Wasi is 16 children), and average daily attendance is four children. On this point the mothers and the authorities say that the service is not adapted to their needs or their expectations as to how children should be treated and cared for at this age; this generates conflict between them and the daycare mothers. Nevertheless, mothers appreciate the food offered through Wawa Wasi.

With respect to the kindergarten (for ages three to five years), enrolment is 26 children out of the 47 in that age group, which means that 21 children from the community are not receiving this service. We noted that children begin school at age four or five; the largest number not enrolled are probably three-year-olds, for their parents consider that they do not yet have the required skills to begin their school career.

Three-year-olds are the most likely to miss classes. The teacher and the parents have opted for the notion of the "part-time" or "free" student while the child gets accustomed to the kindergarten, i.e. they will not insist that the child attend every day. By contrast, five-year-olds are required not to miss classes, and they must acquire cognitive learning (numbers, reading, writing their name, colors etc.) because they will next be going on to grade 1.

As to primary school, there are a total of 34 children enrolled in the first and second grades. It is difficult to determine how many children are not enrolled, because some students are over-age and some come from other communities and are thus not recorded in the local registry. However, in comparison with other programs, this is the one with the greatest coverage.

The teachers:

The teachers assigned to the various levels of education (i.e. for children up to eight years of age) have more than seven years of field experience, with the exception of the Wawa Wasi program, which is run by mothers from the community. One problem with the allocation of teaching slots, especially at the initial level, it is the small number of bilingual teachers trained for working with children at this level. Many communities have similar difficulties: the break between initial and primary school is not only methodological but also linguistic, and this affects communication and consequently learning processes.

Retention of teachers in the community: only the daycare mother and the initial education teacher live in the community. The primary teachers commute daily from different places. Yet it seems that living in the community or not does not have much impact on the separation that exists between

⁶⁰ Wawa Wasi is a program run by the Ministry for Women and Social Development that provides comprehensive daycare (health, nutrition and education) for children between six months and three years, when the first cycle of initial education officially begins.

community life and the dynamics of the institutions themselves: the teachers devote very little time to getting to know the families and working with them, and there is no dedicated space or time for children who need learning reinforcement. The link between these institutions and the community is strictly utilitarian, and is invoked only when something is needed from the parents.

Frequency and scope of services:

All childcare and education services are offered five days a week: the kindergarten and primary school take vacation breaks, while the Wawa Wasi center operates all year.

The school day averages four hours and 30 minutes in the kindergarten and the school, and is longer in the Wawa Wasi. The Wawa Wasi program offers lunches, while the kindergarten and school receive the school breakfast ration under the meals program (PRONAA) of the Ministry for Women and Social Development: here there are occasional delivery problems (for example, at the time of the study the rations had not arrived for two months).

The rations are supposed to be picked up by the principals or teachers from the PRONAA warehouse in the provincial capital, which entails a trip of two or three hours and travel costs. In some cases, this means that the teachers will be away during class time.

Infrastructure:

In general terms, we may say that while there have been some investments in upgrades and maintenance (in 2008, for example, the equivalent of US\$1,433 was spent on school repairs), there is not enough money to resolve the precarious physical conditions in the kindergarten and the school.

In the last year support has been received from the “Children of the Amazon” Project sponsored by partner institutions (PUCP, Municipality; AMA, AMABISEC, OCAM), with financing from the Bernard van Leer Foundation, and this has helped to equip the initial and primary levels with materials and open-air spaces.

In terms of facilities, the Wawa Wasi center has a basin near the water source. The kindergarten and the school have latrines and piped water, although it is not guaranteed fit for consumption.

2.4.2. The Dominant Educational Methodology

An important aspect to note is the methodological differences in each of these programs, and particularly between those of the kindergarten and primary school, in terms of the distribution of classroom space, the placement of desks, and the kinds of materials available.

Our classroom observations corroborate the findings of other research in rural settings (Reátegui, 2008; Ramírez, 2003; Cueto & Secada, 2000), where there is a glaring discrepancy between the official line of the Ministry of Education and actual conditions in the classroom. We found that the teacher would be speaking nearly all the time, and the children would respond with monosyllables or short expressions. The teachers do little to foster reflection and metacognition, betray discriminatory attitudes, and take disciplinary measures that undermine children's self-esteem (although we observed no gender distinctions). Printed materials for developing reading and writing skills are almost nonexistent, and mathematical reasoning is taught through mechanical activities that do not guarantee understanding of the information.

The teachers have methodological problems in dealing with the diversity in their classrooms, not only with respect to age (multitask classrooms in the case of the kindergarten, and overage students in the primary school), and with the different levels of learning and linguistic capabilities.

There is confusion among the teachers with respect to the conceptual and methodological framework in terms of recognizing that "reading means understanding what one reads and writing means expressing one's own ideas and sentiments, and not simply copying." The texts used for teaching and encouraging reading and writing do not relate to the children's experience and are of no meaning or use in their daily lives. The primary teachers complained that the texts in Asháninka provided by the Ministry of Education were not consistent with local writing patterns and orthography, and the teachers found them confusing and not much use.

3. A Look at Educational Transitions in the Teoría Native Community

When we speak of educational transitions, the conceptual framework developed to this point tells us that these are individual and subjective processes that are constructed from the interrelationships that children establish with other players in different scenarios. It also tells us that "successful" transitions require certain specific conditions, which must be capable of verification through concrete data for each case.

The project working group decided that these data should relate to the learning achievements of children in indigenous communities, consistent with their level and age, according to criteria established for each national education system. This decision was influenced more by the tendency observed in education policies than by a focus on child development.

An overview of the educational transitions that children in indigenous communities experience requires us, then, to have an approximation of their academic achievement, so as to identify the factors that influence it. This is the topic of the following section.

3.1. Children's Academic Learning in the Teoría Native Community

As part of the Baseline Report for the "Children of the Amazon" Project,⁶¹ the development and learning of children of the Teoría Native Community was evaluated,⁶² with the following conclusions:

Children attending the local Wawa Wasi center (six months to three years)

- The children attending the Wawa Wasi showed levels of development far below what was expected, both in terms of overall performance and in specific areas. Nutrition was an important factor: 48.2% of children in this age group suffered from chronic malnutrition, and did not have the bodily energy needed to perform the physical activities that cognitive processes require.

⁶¹ The Children of the Amazon Project has been working to improve the quality of early childhood education among indigenous peoples of the *selva central*. The project is sponsored by a partnership involving the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú, Municipalidad Distrital de Mazamari, Asociación de Maestros Bilingües Interculturales, Organización de Comunidades Asháninkas del Distrito de Mazamari and the Asociación de Pueblos Indígenas, under the auspices of the Bernard van Leer Foundation.

⁶² The evaluation of development and learning in children from six months to eight years was done by the psychologist Ethel Gherzi and students of the education faculty of the Pontificia Universidad Católica del Perú at the request of the Children of the Amazon Project as part of the baseline report. Another evaluation of nutritional status and hemoglobin counts was conducted by nurses and nutritionists.

- The best performance was in areas related to large motor functions and personal social development. This could reflect the learning that children receive at home from a very early age, as well as their lifestyle as it relates to bodily control and self-sufficiency.
- The areas of least progress are in auditory and language skills and fine motor functions. Up to 18 months of age, children communicate primarily through gestures or short sounds that do not correspond to any word. By the age of two or three they have only a restricted vocabulary of words, some in Spanish and others in Asháninka, and verbal comprehension in particular is limited.
- With respect to fine motor skills, their progress is held back by lack of experience with manipulation and, above all, by children's non-responsiveness to unfamiliar stimuli.

Children attending the kindergarten (three to five years)

- The qualitative analysis of large motor functions shows that children have completely mastered overall bodily movement (dynamic coordination) and balance (static coordination) and that their performance falls short only in actions related to the upper extremities, such as throwing and catching.
- With respect to auditory and language skills we find that nearly all children speak Asháninka and Spanish, but some have a better level of oral understanding in Asháninka. Most of the children use Spanish to name things around them and to communicate with peers and adults. In this group, Asháninka seems to be a language that is used only at home, a finding consistent with other studies in rural settings which reveal that school is identified, by children and parents alike, as a place for the use of Spanish.
- It must be noted that fine motor control is the area of least progress. The test included activities associated with the development of mathematical thinking, on the understanding that children in this age group (three to five years) express their reasoning in concrete perceptual-motor activities (responses emphasizing manipulation of materials).
- The qualitative analysis points to difficulties in classification processes: children have trouble grouping partial elements together into a whole on the basis of two or more notions (in the test case: color, shape, size). It was also found that while they achieved the expected results in manipulating and constructing with objects, their performance fell off significantly in graphic-motor aspects that involve using a pencil.
- Personal social development was the next best area of performance after large motor control. In general, as children come to know and trust previously unfamiliar adults their sense of personal security will increase and they will make adequate progress in terms of independence and self-sufficiency.

Children attending the first and second grade of primary school (six to eight years)

Reading and writing skills

- The results of the reading and writing evaluation in the first grade show that most children are between the pre-syllabic and the syllabic levels, which are well short of the literacy level. However, even though they are pre-syllabic, most of these children have already discovered that there is a relationship between oral language and written language
- The principal observations with respect to writing are these:
 - Most children "write" characters that look like letters in combination with real letters.

- They mix upper and lower cases with individual letters.
- They link letters in groups that look like words but have no meaning.
- Some write with a volume criterion, and they will put together at least four letters randomly to look like a word.
- In the first grade there is no evidence of comprehensive reading, even when it is to be expected that by mid-year children will be able to read a paragraph of at least five or six lines.
- In the reading and writing test in second grade, all the children are at the literacy level, i.e. they have acquired the coding, their writing is legible and understandable, even if there are mistakes:
 - Of the 18 children tested in reading and writing 14 produced writing that was legible, and 4, while they wrote legibly, had noticeable problems with inverted syllables, missing letters, and spelling mistakes.
 - All the children construct sentences with inadequate internal structures: they confuse the parts of speech, they use the wrong verb tense, agreement of number and person is faulty, ideas are disorganized and do not flow properly or are not well linked. There is no paragraph separation, writing runs on continuously, there are problems in joining or separating words, and there are spelling mistakes.
- As a result, children were subsequently unable to read and understand what they had written or to enjoy what they were reading.
- By the middle of the second grade children should be able to produce a text presenting more than one idea about a topic, using at least two paragraphs. We observed that there were generally two ideas and sometimes even three, based on the interpretation of the image, but that the majority of children (11) used no more than four lines, very few (4) wrote six to eight lines, and only two produced a script with 12 lines (and ideas were repeated throughout the text). In general, we may say that their writing “ran on,” without any proper sentence organization and still less paragraph separation.
- Only one girl (Angie) among the 17 children demonstrated good reading comprehension (A-level), two girls and one boy earned a B, and the other 13 children had no reading comprehension. We noted that in responding they relied on identifying some of the words contained in the question and then looked through the text to copy words or sentences that included that word. In the end, their answers bore no relation to the question but were simply extracted by rote from the text.

Mathematical reasoning

- The results in arithmetic and statistics were far below the median. Performance was better in geometry: here the questions dealt with the notion of location in space, and consequently their previous day-to-day experience may have influenced their answers.
- The qualitative analysis showed that the children have not acquired the concept of number.
- Reading comprehension problems had an impact on the test results: the children could not decode the instructions for each of the tasks presented in the items, much less understand the problems enunciated verbally. As in the first grade, when presented with a verbal problem the children first read it through, then understand it, and finally translate it from natural into mathematical language.
- In qualitative terms, the children recognize the positioning of units, tens and hundreds but they have not really grasped the concept of number. They construct numerical series mechanically, and there are also stereotyped responses.

- In geometry they have trouble working with the concept of inclusion. The children are aware of space as something that exists around them, and they recognize geometric figures, but only by their shape as a whole, i.e. by their physical appearance and not by their parts or properties.
- From a qualitative analysis of the responses in the two grades, we observe that the children, in handling questions, will be guided by partial aspects of the problem presented, either representative aspects (graphs, tables) or certain words within the question, evidencing concrete thinking and the absence of observation, analysis and synthesis.

The problems reflected in the children's academic achievements may be influenced by the methodology used in the schools, and by the schools' limitations in terms of infrastructure, equipment and educational material. However, there is an important element of analysis linked to the acquisition of language and its impact on learning. We frequently observed at all levels of schooling that language is the area that poses the greatest difficulties. This has a direct effect on reading, writing and comprehension, which in turn has implications for solving mathematical problems.

An aspect that requires further research is the relationship between children living in societies without a written language (where social and cultural contexts are constructed orally) and the learning processes by which they arrive at levels of symbolization and abstraction with verbal codes. The school demands linguistic capacities to develop a literate society, but the indigenous family environment does not offer sufficient support for this.

3.2. Some Considerations About "Successful" Outcomes

The methodology used for the case study required us to identify children who stand out as learners and may be considered "successful" at each level of education: Wawa Wasi (six months to three years), kindergarten (three to five years), first grade (six to seven years) and second grade (seven to eight years).

The results of the development and learning assessment confirmed the national statistics with respect to the poor school performance of children in the country's rural areas. However, we also looked at the children individually, using those results together with the opinion of the daycare providers (Wawa Wasi), the teachers and the community authorities who, besides "qualifications," incorporate criteria such as responsibility, obedience, cooperation, peer popularity, and some special skill (e.g. singing, public speaking). In this way we were able to identify at each level one boy and one girl who were considered "successful," for a total of eight boys and girls,⁶³ and from observing and interviewing them we were able to understand why they were doing better at school than other children living in the same social, economic and cultural conditions.

3.2.1. Internal Factors for Success

We may report that these children received no special treatment in the school programs, i.e. the conditions in the care and education programs, such as the methodology, infrastructure, educational materials and personnel (daycare mother, teachers) are the same for all children enrolled. This leads us to suppose that the elements differentiating their levels of success are rooted in the family setting, while recognizing that the children themselves contribute to maintaining their school success.

⁶³ To protect the confidentiality of the information we shall not mention the real names of these children.

Before examining the family factors, however, it is important to consider the common characteristics of these children, as revealed in resilience studies conducted a few years earlier. The children with the best results have the following characteristics:

Personal skills and the capacity to relate to others:

- Permanent state of tranquility and security in relations with their peers, teachers and other persons.
- They avoid conflict situations, or at least they will not pick a fight.
- They demonstrate clarity in their frames of reference, i.e. they know what is expected of them and they know what is allowed and what is forbidden in each sphere of development (school, home, community), and they move flexibly within these frameworks.
- They are more independent and self-sufficient in their relations with other children and they have a sense of responsibility, which makes them "reliable" in the eyes of significant people around them, contributing to a positive image of themselves (for aspects relating to communication capacity we collected information from children two years and older).
- They see themselves as being good in "something" that differentiates them from others.
- They feel important within their family group and they willingly accept responsibilities.
- They exhibit leadership within their peer group and adaptability to groups of older children or adults.
- They are self-demanding and are more likely to ask the teachers for additional work.
- They have clear personal interests and they seek out opportunities to develop them independent of adults.
- They are not afraid to ask when they do not understand something.

Cognitive capacities:

- Greater use of language to express ideas and needs.
- Knowledge of their physical environment and its details (e.g. the functions of plants) in relation to their age.
- Mastery of the learning contents pursued in the classroom.
- Facility and speed in understanding new notions, which gives meaning to going to school.
- Permanent state of curiosity, initiative and the need to be constantly active.
- More creativity, making better use of their surroundings to satisfy their needs for play and exploration.

3.2.2. External Factors for Success

As indicated above, the outcomes suggest that in the Teoría Native Community it is the family's support that has the greatest influence over children's learning success at school. This is because the families can provide their children with the basic skills to begin the learning process, and here the mechanism of relationship and communication used between adults and children is of special importance.

The **family settings** of the most successful learners exhibit common features such as these:

A. Fathers and mothers have a clear and shared idea of development goals for their children and how to achieve them.

The ethnotheories⁶⁴ that parents have about raising children (Super & Harkness, 1986) translate into development goals, which they expect their children to achieve through the process of socialization, in which the home, the community and the school play important functions.

In interviews with parents and grandparents⁶⁵ we found that the development goals set for children related directly to expectations of progress ("I want him to become a professional, and so I'm sending him to school"). There is an idea of a life plan (planning beyond day-to-day existence) and the kindergarten/school is seen as a means of achieving that.

We observed that the parents spare no effort to provide children with the space, time and materials to reinforce their school learning at home: "we have to support them, if we don't who will?"

Parents are very eager for their children to receive a good education, for which they have set certain quality standards that always relate to the performance of the teachers and to what their children tell them.

Interviewer: *Do you live in the community?*

Father: No, I live further up country, on a farm.

How long does it take to get there?

On foot, about two hours, but it's fast with my motorbike.

How do you bring your children to kindergarten and school?

On my motorbike, I bring them every morning and they walk home.

Are there not other communities with schools closer to the farm?

Yes, but the teaching is no good there, the teachers often don't show up, and they don't treat the children well.

So you decided they should study in Teoría?

Yes, because here at least the teachers come, there are classes every day, and the kids come home happy.

The parents seem to have a cordial relation with the teachers, and they meet with them when invited, but they do not seem to have any permanent relationship or ongoing involvement with school life. Rather, they monitor the teacher's performance through their children's comments about:

- What they did during the day.
- The new things the teacher taught them.
- The tasks they were assigned.

⁶⁴ The authors refer to the set of ideas and beliefs that parents have about parenting, constructed on the basis of their cultural group, their life experiences, and their level of education.

⁶⁵ Two of the eight children identified in the study have been in the care of their grandparents, virtually since birth. They do not live with or visit their biological parents. These children regard their grandparents as their parents. For ease of reading we shall refer to the persons responsible for caring for the children as the parents.

- Whether the teacher came to class.

The families of the children covered by the study consist of a male figure (father or grandfather), a female figure (mother or grandmother) and siblings (older and younger). Not all couples are exclusively indigenous: in three of the eight families one partner is a *colono* (non-indigenous settler). An important aspect that influences the ethnotheory of parents seems to be their own life experience, the cultural blend that results from the union of partners, and the opportunity for the father, in particular, to have frequent contact with the outside world (going to the city, having worked there, etc.), which opens perspectives and expectations about the children's future. In contrast to other parents, they have more on which to base their intuitions about bringing up their children and the development goals they set for them. Then, all the effort they make for their children's education begins to have meaning.

B. A wide-ranging parental commitment and close observation of children's differences.

Childrearing studies have shown that the permanent presence of an affectionate adult who takes responsibility for raising the child will have an important impact on the development of a secure and mentally healthy personality.

We noted that family decisions are taken jointly by the couple, but it is the woman (mother or grandmother) who provides the children with care and attention, who sees that they go to school, that they are fed and that they do their homework. Yet while the woman will guide the children as to how they should behave, discipline is meted out by the father.

An important aspect is the capacity of the parents to be observant and sensitive to their children's needs and capacities as they grow, and the intuitive way in which they respond and act.

Interviewer: *When did you send your daughter to kindergarten?*

Mother: When she was three, but we talked with the teacher so she could attend part-time.

How does that work?

She doesn't have to go every day, or she can go for a few hours and then I pick her up.

And why did you arrange that?

I didn't know if she would want to stay, if she could really handle kindergarten, but little by little she got accustomed, and she really wanted to go because her four-year-old cousin was there.

In productive activities where the children help out, the mothers and fathers are judicious in the kind of responsibility they assign and they watch to make sure the child can handle it.

C. Parenting based on communication and positive relations among all family members

A feature common to all the families identified is that communication serves as the basis for socialization. The parents say they use dialogue and talk with the children about their expectations, about how they should behave, and about the things they did in school. There is no specific time set aside for such conversation: it may take place while the child is helping the mother select seeds to string for necklaces, or helping to peel yucca, or on the way to the field. The dialogues that take place at these times are not merely descriptive (what the child did or not); the parents will ask and ask again—they enjoy hearing about their children's doings while at the same time helping them think about what has happened.

In the face of misbehavior (generally related to disobedience) parents tend to rely on dialogue and prohibition rather than physical punishment, which is reserved for extreme situations.

Parents will encourage their children to continue studying to improve themselves, and when the children succeed (a good report card, for example) the parents will reward them by buying them candy or some other treat when they go to town. For the children this is a concrete manifestation of their parents' affection.

The older siblings have an important role. Not only will they help the younger children with their homework but, perhaps more interestingly, the older ones will challenge the younger ones to be self-demanding and to learn faster, and at the same time they serve as a harbinger, allowing the younger children to look ahead to what they will be learning at school in the future. The younger children will sit down and listen while the older ones are studying and they seem to make mental note of the topics that they will soon become familiar with when they go to school, making it easier to learn.

D. The mother's level of education is important but not a determinant; there are other factors that help her be a good mediator in her children's learning.

Many studies have found a direct relationship between the mother's level of schooling and the children's school performance (Halpern, 1986; UNESCO, 1994). While this is certainly an influential factor, as the mothers will have more tools for accessing information, there are other factors that should be mentioned.

In the families of the eight children studied, we observed that the mothers were directly responsible for caring for the children. Two of the mothers had not completed primary school, two had done so, one had completed high school, and one had no education. Of the eight mothers, we may say that three are illiterate. But what they have in common is their life experience; all of them had had some experience in raising children before devoting themselves to their own children (identified as successful):

- One mother said that she had cared for children in Huancayo before returning to her community, getting married and having her own family.
- Another said that, on the death of her mother, she was left to look after four younger siblings, and she had to give up her studies to do so.
- Grandmothers who are looking after their grandchildren benefit from the experience of raising their own children to improve their approach.

Another important aspect is access to information on issues related to child development. Most of these mothers have had the opportunity to work as community health or education promoters or as daycare providers, and as a result they have had greater access to "scientific" information and have been able to use it in raising their own children.

In the **setting of the programs**, the most important factor seems to be the relationship that the children manage to establish with their teachers. The eight boys and girls said they were happy with their teachers.

The teachers generally have no difficulties in their relations with children who do well at school, in contrast to the poor learners with whom the teachers must spend more time. When the teacher has to devote extra time to their classmates, the children in the study apparently use the opportunity to satisfy their own needs and demands for learning. One teacher said this about a good student:

"He gets his work done fast, and while I am with other children he asks permission to play with the blocks. We call him the architect, because he's always making roads and bridges, knocking them down, and rebuilding them."

The children in the study see that their teachers appreciate their "talents," and they frequently take part in school activities such as singing, reciting or dancing.

In general terms, the basic skills that children develop in the family setting, together with their own strengths, win recognition from the teacher which in turn helps them to have a positive relationship with the teacher, keeping them motivated to continue doing well at school. In other words, this generates a virtuous circle that always seems to favor the child.

4. Conclusions from the Study

a) Conceptual considerations from the first stage of the study:

- **Transitions:** critical moments of change that children experience in moving from one setting to another, treating those changes as opportunities for development and learning, in which the conflicts sparked by the change can or should open opportunities for enrichment (Sacristan, 1997; Bennett, 2006), for benefiting from stimuli and "cultural capital" that will offer opportunities to "grow," provided that conditions are favorable for these transitions to occur satisfactorily.
- **Educational transitions:** a relational concept between scenarios and players; this allows us to understand the tension that exists between the home and programs: families have demands and expectations about education programs; but education programs also require basic conditions or skills in the children, which are facilitated by the family environment.
- When children achieve the learning expected for their age in relation to universal knowledge: mathematics, reading, writing and knowledge of science, art and history, when they feel comfortable within the education system and that system helps them develop all their faculties, we may say that the children have **"succeeded" in their educational transitions**, as a result of the synergy established between the scenarios and the players involved.

b) Conclusions from the cases studied in the Teoría Community:

- A closer look at the academic achievements of children in the Teoría Native Community shows that there is a developmental and learning deficit, especially in areas related to cognitive aspects such as language, mathematical reasoning and literacy skills. However, we must recognize that the best outcomes are in the areas of personal social development and large motor skills.
- Having identified the children who scored best on the development and learning tests, we note some common characteristics such as: stable and positive interrelationships, understanding of the frameworks for action and the ability to move freely and independently within those frameworks, emotional security, creativity to satisfy needs for play and learning, better mastery of communication skills and a self-demanding approach to fulfilling tasks or duties, and parents/grandparents who support their education.

- External factors that contribute to the transition process present a special emphasis on communication, demonstrated in the use of language as a medium for reinforcing human relations.
- In both the family and the school setting the positive relationship that children establish with persons important to them, together with their own capacities to negotiate spaces to satisfy their learning needs, becomes the engine that drives the virtuous circle of success in school.
- Support from family members is an important element in the transition process. Although families said they did not know exactly how they should prepare children to begin their school life, it seems that the power of observation of the person looking after the children allows that person to imagine intuitively ways and strategies to make the move to school life as non-traumatic as possible.
- In this family support, older siblings play an important role (perhaps unconsciously) as immediate reference points for the new experience that the younger children are about to have. The relationship of children with their older siblings is not easy and is prone to frequent conflict, but this does not hurt the younger children; on the contrary it seems to stimulate them to place greater learning demands on themselves and probably encourages the desire and the capacity for learning.
- The factors common to the families of children with the best results are these:
 - Mothers and fathers have a clear and shared idea of the development goals that their children must achieve, and how to achieve them.
 - A broad parental commitment to the children's development (survival, well-being and education) and the ability to respond to their demands.
 - Parenting based on communication and a positive relationship among all family members.
 - The education level of the mothers is important but not a determinant, and there are other factors that help the mother to mediate in her children's learning.
- The conventional function of the school is to reproduce the universal culture through acquisition of crystallized knowledge that defines the human species: mathematical knowledge, reading and writing, science, art, religion and history as the intellectual assets of mankind (Reátegui, 2008). This idea apparently influences the ethnotheory of parents and teachers in relation to the school, which focuses on acquiring skills to add, subtract, write and read, rendering invisible other capacities that children acquire through interaction with their environment.
- The study shows that children, thanks to the context and despite their situation of poverty, develop special talents that are different from those developed by urban children. The outcomes indicate that they achieve great dexterity and bodily mastery (they can swim almost from the day they are born), they can perform activities by themselves at an early age (girls between six and eight years already light the stove for lunch) as well as a sense of responsibility and cooperation. They know and can distinguish the different local plants and their uses to cure illness, and they recognize seasonal signs such as the presence of birds, insects or flowers that herald the arrival of the rainy season. Thus the question is: how much human talent are we wasting? Why do we not build more complex learning on the basis of these talents?
- One aspect that deserves further research is the relationship between children and societies with no written language and their learning processes for achieving levels of symbolization and

abstraction with verbal codes. The school demands linguistic capacities to develop a literate society, but the indigenous family environment does not offer sufficient support for this.

5. Lessons Learned and Recommendations for Education Policy

The "critical points" that deserve particular attention within policies and proposals for improving education quality as one of the conditions for the successful passage of children through the education system are these:

1. Teachers who do not have the tools to offer a proper education in rural areas, especially those rooted in societies without written languages, plus the complications of bilingualism or multilingualism.
2. Lack of coherence and continuity between the proposals and methodologies used at the different levels of education, which does not help children to construct learning.
3. Educational infrastructure is precarious and there are no materials to support classroom teaching, and to help develop the symbolic function as a prerequisite for internalizing learning and fostering the development of thinking.
4. There is no comprehensive overview of the educational reality among these populations. In such a situation education must go beyond the holding of classes; schools must be institutions that will prompt and support intersectoral action, as well as involving parents.
5. There is no efficient system of teacher support and coaching, particularly for those in remote places where access to information is difficult.
6. The education system has been dragging along in a disorderly state for years, and this has deepened the educational divide between urban and rural areas, and between the public and private spheres.
7. Families' economic constraints must not be a factor that keeps children away from school. Parents cannot afford school supplies and uniforms to send their children to school (even though education is supposed to be free and uniforms are not mandatory in these contexts).
8. Parents need information on education and child development so they can set developmental goals for their children based on positive expectations. In these circumstances, the sectors involved must make greater efforts to coordinate their work with families and to apply uniform standards of information.
9. The education system must recognize families as the principal allies for achieving academic success, rather than calling on them only to clean the classroom or fix the facilities. The system must incorporate families' expectations, their opinions and their capacities to help achieve educational objectives

Among the strong points that we observed in these contexts, and that can contribute to a better education, we may mention:

1. The organizational capacity of the indigenous communities: they have a participatory decision-making system through which they frequently find answers to their problems. For example, there are rural and indigenous communities that are well aware of the fact that their children cannot go uneducated and they have established schools through their own means, virtually as "private" services. Schools of this kind are called *Igecom* ("communally managed education institution"), i.e. it is the parents (sometimes with the help of the municipality) who hire and

pay the teachers. While this is a positive aspect, it is surely the responsibility of the government to provide free education for vulnerable groups at risk, such as the indigenous communities that fall within the poorest quintile of the national population.

2. The context offers infinite opportunities for child development and learning. These communities have a wealth of environments and natural resources, i.e. they are an open-air laboratory for learning in the great outdoors. Yet the education system takes no advantage of this opportunity, but confines learning to what can be imparted within the four walls of the school.
3. There are teachers who are committed to their people's development, even if there has been much talk recently of poor teaching skills, which in our opinion, are the consequence of disorderly growth in the education system. Despite this, our experience shows that there are teachers who are committed and concerned for the development of their children and who serve as leaders and agents of change within their communities, for example promoting organic gardening, improved childrearing practices, restoration of cultural values and caring for the environment, and they are organizing themselves voluntarily to provide diversified educational offerings.
4. The aspirations of parents in these settings are no different from those of any other family: what they want and expect from the education system is that it will help their children to be better people and equip them with the tools they will need to progress in the future, giving the children opportunities that the parents themselves never had.

All of this demands that, as a society and government, we must:

1. Bring education closer to the people, i.e. improve the mechanisms for decentralizing the system and defining more clearly the educational role of local governments. It is not enough for the local mayor to be committed: there must also be clear mechanisms to institutionalize the educational responsibility of these governments (especially at the district level).
2. Promote greater intersectoral action: while there is one sector responsible for education, the problems and factors are multiple and complex, making intersectoral intervention essential. For example, how can we strengthen teacher support and coaching when roads are so poor and unsafe? How can we prevent malnutrition and parasite infections in the schools if there is no access to safe drinking water? How can we guarantee children's right to an education if their parents have not been able to enroll them? How can we equip students with greater mastery of technology if the minimum tools required are missing?
3. Increase the capacity for planning and managing education with a long-term horizon and a vision of the future. This will require organizing technical and administrative procedures where bureaucracy does not take precedence over educational principles. How can we address education in these times of change when classes officially begin in March, but teachers are assigned to their positions only in June?
4. Build a national alliance for education, especially in benefit of the most vulnerable population groups, and invest in more research to provide solid underpinnings for building a well-thought-out education system for the country.
5. Revise and strengthen strategies for teacher training and coaching, with a comprehensive focus that treats the teacher not just as a person doing a job but as a human being. Life for teachers in rural areas is hard (difficult access, remoteness, little contact with family, working alone without any support). This has a mental and psychological effect on them, and they have no mechanisms of social or emotional support that will help them maintain a positive attitude in their relations with the community, and especially with the children.

Bibliography

- Ainsworth, M. D. S., Blehar, M. C., Waters, E. & Wall, S. (1978). "Patterns of attachment: a psychological study of the strange situation". Hillsdale, N. J.: Erlbaum.
- Anderson, J. (1996). "Viejos problemas en nuevos escenarios: las mujeres en el mundo del trabajo". Lima: Flora Tristán.
- Bennett, J. (2006). Interview published in "Early Childhood Matters," 107, Amsterdam: Bernard van Leer Foundation.
- Bronfenbrenner, U. (1987). "La ecología del desarrollo humano". Barcelona: Paidós.
- Cueto, S. & Secada, W. (2001). "Eficacia escolar en escuelas bilingües en Puno" Lima.
- Gherzi, E. (2004). "Estudio de patrones y prácticas de crianza para optimizar la intervención docente en el desarrollo infantil". Informe final-Documento de trabajo. Lima: Dirección Nacional de Educación Inicial-Ministerio de Educación.
- Gherzi, E. (2008). "Logros de desarrollo y aprendizaje en los niños y las niñas de 6 meses a 8 años de la comunidad nativa de Teoría" en el documento de Línea Base del Proyecto Niños de la Amazonía; unpublished document. Lima: PUCP-FBvL.
- Hardoy, J., Aguirre, R. & Eccher, C. (1993). "Las familias, las mujeres y los niños". Montevideo: Ciedur-Icong, primera edición.
- Harkness, S. & Super, C. M. (2002). "Culture and parenting". In M. H. Bornstein (1995), *Handbook of Parenting, (2). Biology and ecology of parenting*, pp. 253-280. Mahwah, N. J.: Erlbaum.
- Halpern, R. (1986). "Effects of early childhood intervention on primary schools progress on Latin America", *Comparative Education Review*, 30(2).
- López, F. (1990). Desarrollo social y de la personalidad. En J. Palacios, A. Marchesi & C. Coll (Comps.), *Desarrollo psicológico y educación, I. Psicología Evolutiva*, pp. 99-112. Madrid: Alianza.
- López, F. & Ortiz, M. J. (1999). El desarrollo del apego durante la infancia. En F. López, I. Etxebarria, M. J. Fuentes & M. J. Ortiz (Coords.), *Desarrollo afectivo y social*, pp. 41-65. Madrid: Pirámide.
- Moreno, M. C. (1989). El ambiente y sus estímulos en el desarrollo del niño. *Cuadernos de Pedagogía*, 171, pp. 60-62.
- Moromizato, R., Gherzi, E., Cormack, M., Morante, E. & Lirya, R. (2007). "Estudio de oferta de servicios de atención infantil para el óptimo desarrollo de niños y niñas menores de seis en zonas de pobreza"—Informe final: Cise-UCP-Documento de trabajo. Lima: Dirección Nacional de Educación Inicial - Ministerio de Educación.
- Moromizato, R. (2007). "Buscando nuevos rumbos para mejores oportunidades", PUCP- AAMA-FBvL, Lima-Perú. En Palacios, A. Marchesi & C. Coll (Eds.), *Desarrollo psicológico y educación, I. Psicología Evolutiva*, pp. 305-326. Madrid: Alianza.
- Moreno, M. C. & Cubero, R. (1990). Relaciones sociales: Familia, escuela, compañeros. Años preescolares. En J. Palacios, A. Marchesi y C. Coll (Comps.), *Desarrollo psicológico y educación, I. Psicología evolutiva*, pp. 219-232. Madrid: Alianza.
- López, N. (2005). "Equidad educativa y desigualdad social". Buenos Aires: Iipe, UNESCO.
- Palacios, J. (1999a). *La familia como contexto de desarrollo humano*. Sevilla: Secretariado de Publicaciones de la Universidad de Sevilla.
- Palacios, J. & Moreno, M. C. (1994). Contexto familiar y desarrollo social. En M. J. Rodrigo (Ed.), *Contexto y desarrollo social* (157-188). Madrid, Síntesis.
- Palacios, J. & Rodrigo, M. J. (1998). La familia como contexto de desarrollo humano. En M. J. Rodrigo & J. Palacios (Coords.), *Familia y desarrollo humano*, pp. 25-44. Madrid: Alianza.
- Peralta, M. V. (2007). Documento de trabajo "Transiciones en educación infantil: Un marco para abordar el tema de la calidad". Wawa Wasi: OEA.
- Pollit, E. (2002). "Consecuencias de la desnutrición en el escolar peruano". Lima: Fondo Editorial.

- Ramírez, E. (s/f). "Estudio sobre la educación para la población rural en Perú". Lima: Ministerio de Educación.
- Reategui, N. (2008). "Niños rurales andinos: Condiciones de aprendizaje y desarrollo cognitivo-afectivo". Lima: Foro Educativo.
- Sacristán, J. (1997). "La transición a la educación secundaria". Madrid: Ediciones Morata.
- Trivelli, C. (2005). "Estrategias de Política de Desarrollo Rural en el Perú", En *Economía y Sociedad* 57. Consorcio de Investigación Económica y Social (CIES), Lima.
- Trivelli, C. et al. (2000). "Desafío del desarrollo rural en el Perú". Lima: Consorcio de Investigación Económica y Social (CIES).

Chapter V. VENEZUELA CASE STUDY
AÑÚ ETHNIC GROUP OF THE LAGUNA DE SINAMAICA

Report Presented By:

Ileana Mendoza (Coordinator)
Elizabeth Segovia (Researcher)
Alí Fernández (Consultant)

Introduction. 1. The Context of the Study. 1.1. Brief History of the Locality: The Laguna de Sinamaica. 1.2. Population and Ethnic Origin. 1.3. Language and Percentage of Speakers. 1.4. Main Local Institutions and Organizations: Percentage of the Population Involved. 1.5. Main Local Sources of Income. 1.6. Principal Rites and Beliefs. 1.7. Characterization of the Family. 2. Childhood Transitions, from the Viewpoint of the Children, the Families and the Community. 2.1. The Meaning of the Childcare Center. 2.2. Pros and Cons of the Childcare Center. 2.3. Expectations with Respect to the Childcare Center. 2.4. The Meaning of the School. 2.5. Pros and Cons of the School. 2.6. Expectations with Respect to the School. 3. Conclusions. 4. Lessons Learned From and For Educational Policy. Bibliography.

Introduction

The Venezuela research team focused its case study on six boys and girls of the Añú community, located in the Laguna de Sinamaica in the State of Zulia. The purpose of the study was to gain a comprehensive understanding of the transitions experienced by children from birth through the age of eight in rural, indigenous and border communities, in the context of their educational experiences within their localities.

1. The Context of the Study

1.1. Brief History of the Locality: The Laguna de Sinamaica

The Laguna (Lagoon) de Sinamaica is located in the northwestern portion of the State of Zulia, covering approximately 65 km² in the autonomous municipality of José Antonio Páez. It is bounded to the north by the Gran Eneal, and to the south by the Municipio Mara. To the east lies Puerto Cuervito linking the lagoon to the village of San Bartolomé de Sinamaica, and also the mouth of the Limon River, the principal watercourse of the area. To the west are the villages of Carrasquero and Molinete.

The Lagoon is surrounded by a majestic landscape of cattail reeds and mangrove, and there are many palafittes or stilt houses, made of wood and reeds, suspended above the water on stakes of mangrove. The concept of water as the medium of subsistence and a determinant of social organization occupies in fact an important place in the collective representations and myths of the Añú, a particular feature of a way of life that is the most distinctive trait of the Wayuü, the principal ethnic group of the Zulia region.

From a historical viewpoint, the earliest records of the locality date back to 1499 when the Spanish explorer Alonso de Ojeda arrived at Lake Maracaibo. At that time the lake was already covered along its northwestern shore by palafittes, the homes of the principal inhabitants (the Añú) together with the Aliles, Alcojolados, Toas, Saparas and Sinamaicas.

The word Añú means "water people," from the Wayuti word "*Parauja*" (composed of *para*, "sea", and *Añú*, "people") which translates as "man of the seashore," "people of the seacoast." The qualifier *Paraujano* appears in the literature in several forms: Parhowka, Parawgwan, Paraurano, Prawkan, Paraocan and Paraogwan.



Palafittes, Laguna de Sinamaica

1.2. Population and Ethnic Origin

It is difficult to estimate the indigenous Añú population, as the numerical data are disputed. However, the most recent census (INE, 2001) gives a figure of 511,329 individuals registered among the country's 32 ethnic groups, of which around 17,440 belong to the Añú people, the fourth-largest ethnic group in Venezuela, comprising the Añú, Aliles, Toas, Parahutes, Paraüja, Mohanes, Zaparas, Auzales and Arubaes families (Finol, undated).

Its members currently live in the State of Zulia, in both dry-land and stilt houses, distributed geographically from the Laguna de Sinamaica to Carrasquero, Campo Mara and El Moján; Barrio Santa Rosa de Agua in the city of Maracaibo and the northeasterly shore of Lake Maracaibo, to the mouths of the Palmar, Colón and Catatumbo rivers.

According to different censuses taken during the second half of the 20th century, the Añú indigenous group numbered 2,612 in 1982 (Central Office of Statistics and Informatics, OCEI, 1985), while the same agency's indigenous census of 1992 placed the number at 17,440 individuals (OCEI, 1993-1994).

On the other hand, the 2001 Population and Housing Census by the National Statistics Institute (INE, 2003) recorded only 11,205 individuals calling themselves Añú, living either in traditional communities (3,854) or in urban areas (7,351). These data are obviously contradictory, and we have taken the figures from the 1992 census as the most reliable. However, it is interesting to note that, in the most recent census conducted in March 2002, the Laguna de Sinamaica is divided officially into 15 sectors, recognized by their own inhabitants. They are the following, by order of size: 1. El Barro (192 dwellings), 2. La Boquita (113 dwellings), 3. Las Parcelas (37 dwellings), 4. Nuevo Mundo (28 dwellings), 5. Caño Morita (23 dwellings), 6. El Cañito (22 dwellings), 7. Puerto Cuervito (21 dwellings), 8. El Junquito (17 dwellings), 9. Boca del Caño (15 dwellings), 10. La Ponchera (9 dwellings), 11. Zanzibar (9 dwellings), 12. Lagunita (9 dwellings), 13. El Javal (8 dwellings), 14. La Rosa (5 dwellings), and 15. Isla Brasil (4 dwellings).

In all, there are estimated to be approximately 512 stilt houses in the Laguna de Sinamaica, home to 3,481 residents distributed among the 15 sectors identified above in the following proportions:

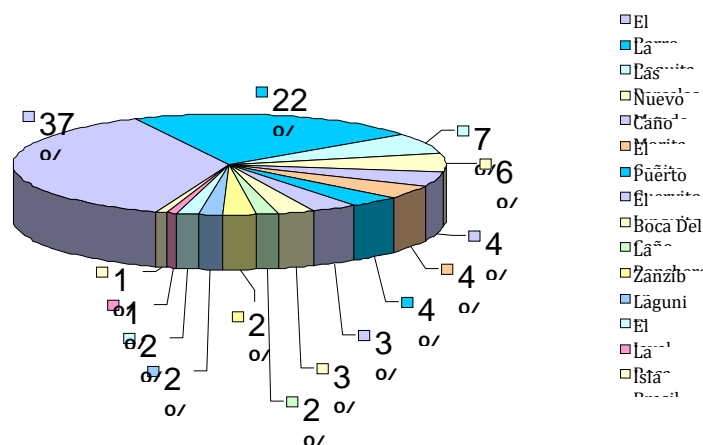


Figure 1. Percentage of dwellings located in the Laguna de Sinamaica.
Source: INE (2000)

1.3. Language and Percentage of Speakers

The Añú belong to the Arawak linguistic group. Their language is Añunaiki, the “tongue of the Añú,” but the villagers make little use of it and have mastered Spanish or Creole. For this reason, virtually none of the children are bilingual: since Añunaiki is used neither by the parents nor in school, Spanish has taken over (Amodio, 2005) at the expense of the people's own culture.

Generally speaking, the acculturation process has been a violent one for the Añú people, generating elements of self-denial and low self-esteem.

Similarly, the gradual loss of their language is both a cause and a consequence of this deterioration. We know of only one Añunaiki speaker, and that person is currently involved with the Linguistic Revitalization Project sponsored by UNICEF and the University of Zulia.

The efforts of the only native speaker (Jofry) and other young Añú enthusiasts to converse in and teach the language to members of the community (including the female reed cutters) and in the schools seems to be having a multiplier effect on a portion of the population, and a positive impact from the symbolic viewpoint for the community as a whole.

1.4. Main Local Institutions and Organizations: Percentage of the Population Involved

With respect to educational institutions, there are two "Bolivarian schools" operating on a full-time basis in the Laguna de Sinamaica: the Escuela Nacional Bolivariana "Sinamaica," and the Escuela Bolivariana "Nuevo Mundo." The first, founded on 1 October 1960, is located in the El Barro sector and has 414 students and 20 teachers, six of whom are Añú. The other school is located in the Nuevo Mundo sector: it was founded in 1976 and has 198 students and 12 teachers, only four of whom are of the Añú people.

There are also four multi-family day care centers ("*multihogares*") in the zone: "Nuevo Mundo", "Puerto Curvito," "Madre Asunta," and "Mi Angelito Añú," attended by around 90 children (or about 30 children each). These day care centers are financed by the National Autonomous Service for the Comprehensive Care of Children and the Family (SENIFA), an agency of the Ministry of Health and Social Development. They offer nonconventional education to children under the age of six through the so-called Hogains, which are childcare facilities run according to the modalities of the "Family Hogain" (operated in private family dwellings by a "care mother" who looks after eight children with the assistance of an official supervisor), and the "Community Hogain," which operates in a community facility that has been prepared and outfitted by local people, and is run by three care mothers under official supervision (IBE-UNESCO, 2006). SENIFA provides a monthly meal allowance for each child together with a monthly bonus for the care mothers, each of whom looks after ten children.

Yet conditions in the *multihogares* of Laguna de Sinamaica are not very attractive: lacking their own facilities, they have opted for the Family Hogain, providing childcare in family homes. While the situation there is better, they have become increasingly crowded and the natural family dynamics have broken down on some occasions.

From our observations in the three educational institutions of Laguna de Sinamaica, we can report the following information:

- **Multihogar "Angelito Añú":** Its infrastructure consists of a stilt house in good operating condition. It operates under the "Family Hogain" modality, in the home of the care mother, who has set aside space for this purpose. Within the home, we found the educational environment to be precarious: the institution has only two spaces, assigned by age groups, and overcrowding is obvious.
- **Escuela Bolivariana "Nuevo Mundo":** During our visits, we noted that its infrastructure is very similar to traditional community buildings. An important feature of this school is that it operates on land reclaimed from the Laguna de Sinamaica, offering additional space for

children to pursue various activities and to play and interact with each other. The internal arrangement of this school allows for different areas of work in the classrooms, while the outdoor areas are spacious and sunny, suitable for sports and recreation, in contrast to conditions in the children's homes.

- **Escuela Bolivariana “Sinamaica”:** This is currently operating on a provisional basis in temporary premises while a new school is being built (the old one was deemed unsafe for the children). Its interior layout was organized by the teachers with the help of community members, and the classrooms are separated by reed curtains. The school is a kind of camp with comprehensive classrooms. We found overcrowding and precarious conditions.

School involvement by gender and age. The official data in table 1 (MEP, 2007) show the enrollment of children and adolescents in the school. However, the attendance rate varies in accordance with several factors, including (according to Regnault, 2006) families' material needs and their productive activities (children leaving to work with their parents), as well as institutional and labor issues (shortage of teachers) and cultural factors, reflecting tension between the indigenous culture and "Creole" schooling. The available enrollment data group the indigenous students in the two local Bolivarian schools as follows:

Table 1. Initial Enrollment by Age, 2005-2006 Academic Year

School		Ag	Total	Male	Female
Total		e	608	290	318
E.B.N. SINAMAICA	3 years		5	1	4
	4 years		18	11	7
	5 years		19	11	8
	6 years		13	13	0
	7 years		41	20	21
	8 years		66	28	38
	9 years		53	26	27
	10 years		43	17	26
	11 years		57	23	34
	12 years		44	25	19
	13 years		42	20	22
	14 years		13	8	5
	15 years		5	3	2
	16 years		5	4	1
	17 years		1	0	1
E.B.N. NUEVO MUNDO	3 years		23	14	9
	4 years		4	3	1
	5 years		15	9	6
	6 years		11	5	6
	7 years		19	9	10
	8 years		16	3	13
	9 years		25	11	14
	10 years		16	10	6
	11 years		20	9	11
	12 years		13	4	9

	13 years	“9	2	7
	14 years	5	1	4
	15 years	4	0	4
	16 years	3	0	3

Source: Ministerio de Educación y Deportes. 2007

In terms of participation, social care and public services in this community, there is an indigenous organization known as the "*Movimiento Cultural Paraujano*" (MOCUPA), established in 1987 to defend indigenous rights. Since its creation it has sponsored various efforts that have produced concrete results, including the establishment of the *Casa del Abuelo Añú* ("Añú Grandfather's House"), which serves approximately 65 elders, and the Añú Cultural and Linguistic Revitalization Project, whose members play an active role in decisions on how to improve their quality of life. There are currently two community councils in the process of establishing their operation.

Since 1967 Sinamaica has also had an outpatient health unit located in Puerto Cuervito, but it is inaccessible to much of the population because it is so far from the Lagoon, and many residents lack both the funds and the transportation to use its services.

The *Misión Barrio Adentro* ("In-Barrio Mission") is currently being organized to provide locally-based healthcare to the community, where there is now no provision for the removal of human wastes and garbage. This has created a serious public health problem, for human wastes are deposited directly into the Lagoon, the waters of which are also used for domestic purposes and for children's recreation. Although there is a drinking water connection, service is irregular. Despite this situation, we noted that members of the community have welcomed the Educational and Social Missions program and are participating in it, and this should help improve living conditions for residents of the Laguna de Sinamaica.

1.5. Main Local Sources of Income

The traditional occupations of inhabitants of the Laguna de Sinamaica were mainly fishing, hunting, the gathering of wild fruits and nuts, and the cutting and weaving of cattails and kapok fibers, work that is still pursued primarily by women.

The grandmothers, daughters and granddaughters cut and weave the cattails. Their day starts early, at four or five in the morning; after sharpening their cutting knives, they set out on a trip that may take them until noon.

The work of cutting and weaving cattails, besides being a characteristic and traditional function in the Añú culture, has now become the main source of livelihood, and for many families it is the only one. Another local source of income is the smuggling of gasoline: several male members of the community, lacking other employment, engage cautiously in this activity to meet basic needs (mainly food), under the watchful eye of local authorities.

Fishing is the basis of the Añú economy and the primary means of subsistence; hunting is of secondary importance. The Añú are also adept at building boats to suit the various types of fishing. The inhabitants of the Lagoon have felt the effects of progressive sedimentation and pollution of the Lagoon and its estuary, which have caused various species of fish and birds to die off or to migrate elsewhere. This, together with salinization of the water, has driven many inhabitants to emigrate to areas along the western shore of Lake Maracaibo in pursuit of these activities.

1.6. Principal Rites and Beliefs

The Añú way of life is inseparable from its cosmology, according to which neither the community nor the individual is isolated in the universe. In it, man recognizes himself as part of nature and establishes a kind of family relationship with the plant and animal worlds. The life of man begins in the waters of the lagoon; people also have their own representations and conceptions of life, death, health and disease, and a very close relationship to the concept of the body. Thus, defining the body constitutes one of the fundamental functions of the culture, which systematizes and organizes the perception of the world.

In the Añú worldview there are elements that manifest themselves especially in people's relations to the natural signs that guide their life. For the Añú, the world was created by a god who came down to earth, became a *paraujano* and created its peoples (referring to Matuares and Guanana, where the first Añú people settled), he "made the depths" so that they could build their stilt houses and he provided them with food.

In the course of their life, many Añú were transformed to the point where they lost their human condition. The Añú also hold that animals and plants engage in typically human activities: they talk, dream, dance, weep, or laugh.

Concept of death: When an Añú dies he begins a long journey full of suffering, mystery and surprises, and animals appear along the way to guide him to his final destination. That destination is regarded as the place where the dead Añú will dwell: there all is peace and happiness, and he will be reunited with his ancestors, his parents and his friends who have passed on. In this way there is continuity to life, and the other world is neither far from nor foreign to the one in which the person has lived.

"The moon has always lived here" is a common expression among the Añú. The moon plays an important role in daily life, such as in the cutting of cattails and wood. It also serves as a point of reference for indicating specific periods or moments: the date of departure or return from a trip, menstrual cycles, childbirth, health and other treatments. As an example, the Añú man would say farewell to his family indicating that he would return after three moons, or when the moon was in the last quarter or when it was full.

The close relationship to water, communication with plants and animals, the belief in other worlds, in dreams, and in the figure of the Añú healer (*Autigar*), the object of the most important ritual practice, are all today interwoven with the Catholic religious concept. For example, the cross is worshiped as a sacred symbol, a priest holds confession and communion, images of the Virgin (Virgen del Carmen, San Benito, Santa Lucía) are venerated, and Catholic saints have been accepted as patrons and their feast days are celebrated as in Western society.

The spiritual life of the Añú is guided by a female who in their language is called the *Autigar*. She has great aptitudes and capacities to establish contacts with the superhuman world. She is the Añú healer, and she has a wealth of knowledge about disease and its meaning. Today her work is combined with Western folklore practices, with its figures of "spiritualists", "psychics" or "tobacco smokers", to address and resolve problems of illness.

One of the strongest beliefs among the Añú has to do with the vulnerability of children under the age of three, who are considered more likely to die from the "evil eye" of envious strangers; the *Autigar* will pray for these children and offer them some type of ritual protection such as adorning their bodies with red belts or necklaces strung with seeds, or perhaps bracelets made of little sticks.

When a child is born, the parents bury the umbilical cord and placenta in the stilt house or on the shore of the lagoon, for otherwise the child will die. They will never throw these items into the water, for this would cause the child to drown. If the placenta is not buried, moreover, "the mother will never get over the pain of childbirth" (Amodio, 2005, page 281).

1.7. Characterization of the Family

The Añú communities of the Sinamaica Lagoon are organized in families, which in turn are clustered in nuclei, forming socioeconomic units of stilt houses. The family is organized around the grandmother or the mother, and consequently many areas are inhabited totally by relatives, which gives the place a strong sense of social cohesion among all members.

The woman is the center of the Añú family, and it is she who maintains and transmits cultural values through daily activities and exercises control and leadership of the family group; she is the depository and source of wisdom, the result of life experience transmitted from generation to generation.

According to inhabitants of the lagoon, it is always the mother or the grandmother who told them stories and taught them. Little account is taken of the male as a family figure, as his relations with the children "are determined largely by work time, for he may return from fishing at dawn or at night" (Amodio, 2005, page 297).

The family social and economic unit reflects a pattern of settlement where the oldest woman (the grandmother, mother or maternal aunt) lives at the center, surrounded by the dwellings of siblings, sons and daughters. When they marry, the daughters take up residence near the mother's house, while the sons will move to the place where the wife's mother lives, establishing in this way an alliance between the families. Families are large, averaging between nine and 14 members. The socioeconomic conditions of families covered by the study are precarious, even though all the fathers interviewed were working within the community, some of them in missions (Misión Robinson, Sucre, Salud, etc.) now run by the national government.

As noted above, the homes of the six children selected for the study are very small houses, with three well-defined areas: the sleeping area and living room, constituting the house itself, the kitchen, next to the house, and a sanitary outhouse.

Recreation and play spaces for children are always outside the family home, near the waters of the lagoon, the children's favorite place.

In our non-participatory observation of different households, we found a family environment of respect for elders and visitors. As one Añú mother put it, "the children must know how to greet, look at and respect each person."

The greeting is an essential part of this dynamic: here, the family relationship plays an important role—fathers, brothers, grandfathers, older and younger uncles. This rule is constantly drilled into the children. The Añú culture is one of respect for elders, not only in their presence but also with relation to their knowledge and know-how.

Another aspect we observed was the communication that occurred upon entering and leaving the school. From an early age Añú children are spoken to as if they were adults: there are affectionate expressions, but the emphasis is always on their duties at home and at school. In this way, school tasks are treated as work, as can be appreciated from the following quote from a six-year-old Añú girl in grade 1:

"I like to do my homework. The tasks I have are to write my name, to make drawings of forest trees. I get up in the morning when it is still dark, because mummy makes bread to sell... my grandmother can't do that anymore, because her foot hurts. She has to do everything early, and sometimes I help her to shell the eggs. I keep my uniform in a hamper, where I have all my clothes. I can handle the canoe all by myself, nobody helps me."

We found that children were taken into account for household activities in all the families studied. An important aspect in conversations was an admonishment to look after their belongings and their school materials.

When the children come home from grade 1 or grade 2, the mothers ask them about their homework assignments. We noted that the elder brother of one six-year-old girl was willing to help in this respect.

In the evening, the children eat their dinner seated in a hammock or on a little chair: the dining table is not a feature of the Añú culture. Adults and children eat together, generally around the fire or under some shelter such as an arbor.

Play and recreation

Newborn Añú children are kept in the home until they are close to two months. They are highly dependent on the mother, the father, the elder siblings and grandparents until they are three or four years old, when they are given the independence to play around the houses and to take little canoe rides on the lagoon. Amodio (2005) reports that between the ages of three and six the Añú children play games that prepare them for adult life, including building little canoes, fishing, playing "family," cooking mud "meals," building miniature stilt houses, and making dolls out of reeds.

2. Childhood Transitions, from the Viewpoint of the Children, the Families and the Community

2.1. The Meaning of the Childcare Center

In this section we refer to two types of childcare center: the "multifamily" (*multihogar*) center, and the preschool facility. We make this distinction because the data collected in the study revealed different perceptions of these two institutions.

In effect, the multihogar is seen by its 52-year-old female Añú director as *"a place for feeding and care."* She reported that it was organized in 2002, with a census of local children: *"we had to have ten children for each care mother, and so we could have up to six mothers. We assured the mothers of the children that in this place they would be given food—breakfast and a snack—and that they would be cared for, and the mothers agreed and signed up the children."*

This perception is shared by many community members: the multihogar is seen as a place where children are fed and cared for, the place where the children *"stay while the mothers go to work... in the bush or cutting cattails, secure in the knowledge that the children will be looked after,"* as one 50-year-old Añú man said.

The great strength of the multihogar is that all the staff are Añú, except one teacher who is a Wayuu; she lives in the lagoon, however, and is treated as if she were in indigenous Añú. Consequently, the care and attention that the children receive is appropriate to the social dynamics and childrearing rules

of the Añú people, a factor that is very helpful in the transition from home to the day care center. Reveco (2008) supports this view:

"in this context of noncompetition and of acceptance of others as legitimate, transitions are natural. They just happen, and you don't even notice: I go from the house to the nursery, and since the nursery teacher is just as friendly as my parents, it makes no difference and I don't suffer" (page 35).

In a similar vein, the mothers in the study see the multihogar as a necessary step prior to school, as a phase of adaptation that is closer to the family: *"their aunts and acquaintances are care mothers in the multihogar. The children do not cry to go home and they get accustomed, and they soon have no problems in going to school,"* said the mother of a three-year-old Añú girl.

This mother's assertion allows us to say that the family has an intuitive understanding of the changes and adaptations that the children must go through upon entering school. They see that if the initial changes take place in an environment similar to the home and their childrearing practices, the children will adapt better to primary school.

By contrast, the parents' perception of the preschool attached to the primary school attended by their children is different from that of the multihogar: *"my four-year-old boy is already in school, and from there he will go on to the other grades,"* said one Añú father.

The preschool is regarded as a preparatory stage and is integrated with the school. This provides for continuity in the formal education framework that is seen as necessary for success at school.

The children in the study see the day care center as a place to play with other children. *"I like to play with toys and with the children"* (three-year-old Añú girl). We noted that despite the crowded conditions and the shortage of toys, the center is a place where children can relate to their peers. This situation is very specific to the lagoon. Interchange with other children is also facilitated in the schools' premises; this is an important factor, for most of the families do not have a motorboat, and the distances between their homes preclude any other form of contact.

But there is another reason for going to school, and this is the space it provides for activities, as reflected in the following comment by the teacher of a four-year-old boy:

"He likes to participate. He's interested in learning. He has adapted 100%. He has learned with the help of his mother, who is very interested and comes to the school, she provides information, and she cooperates in school activities. He has the support of his parents, and they know that he is very intelligent."

Another important element in the above quote has to do with the support that parents provide and the development goals they have for their children, goals they believe can be fulfilled if there is interaction with the school. *"He's going to go far. He's very smart, and so I am always very attentive and I talk a lot with the teacher,"* said the mother of a four-year-old boy.

2.2. Pros and Cons of the Childcare Center

We observed are several aspects of the childcare centers in Laguna de Sinamaica that facilitate successful transitions:

- The presence of teachers and care mothers who are members of the indigenous community. This element of cultural relevance and self-appreciation makes changes smoother for the Añú children, because their customs and culture are not denigrated.
- The teachers and the care mothers have a warm, loving and hospitable attitude, and this helps the children to make their transitions satisfactorily.
- The setting is outfitted with local natural materials from the locality of Sinamaica. These elements are reminiscent of the children's home and family and are important for helping them to adapt to a place that, while different, seems familiar to them.
- Food. The presence of the health and food "missions" (government-sponsored) in the school and the *multihogares* is a positive motivation for poor families to send their children to these institutions. The nutrition and health factor is essential for children to achieve their full potential, both in terms of their physical development and their human capital.

As to negative aspects, we identified the following:

- Teachers have inadequate training and no specialization in early childhood education. They know little of the changes that children experience or the strategies needed to stimulate their development, and this limits the teachers' ability to facilitate children's transitions.
- The teachers work in isolation and have no connection to teachers in the next level up. In addition, the teachers have an individualist attitude to their work. One factor that might explain this behavior is the way the work is organized, which does not encourage team discussion or joint responsibility for outcomes, and obliges the teacher to address problems "on their own." This isolation is exacerbated by the lack of communication with teachers at the higher levels, which impedes children's movement among the different levels.
- There is little communication with families about how and what the children are doing. Teachers lack the knowledge and skills to communicate assertively and effectively with parents about changes and about children's development and learning.
- Teaching materials and resources are not such as to favor a constructive learning process.
- The care mothers have little training. The indigenous mothers responsible for the *Hogain* program maintain traditional relations with the children, without much awareness of the effects flowing from the changes that this type of action entails for their integral development.
- Infrastructure and facilities are inadequate for the education of children.

2.3. Expectations with Respect to the Childcare Center

- **Demand for teacher training.** The teachers are hoping for a specialized training and assistance plan in the area of initial education that would help them address the comprehensive development of children and make education relevant to the local culture.
- **Improving childrearing practices. Families and educational figures** (care mothers and significant adults) are seeking to strengthen childrearing practices to make them culturally relevant and committed to children's integral development and the exercise of their rights.
- **School-community linkages.** The school is stressing the emerging role of the initial education teacher in the search for new formulas for community integration, focused on proactive participation by fathers and mothers together with the teachers, in a concerted educational effort for the children of the Añú people.

- **Cultural revitalization.** The Añú people want the school to help them escape from their historic cultural marginalization by reviving the local language and culture. This will require efforts to assert the rights, beliefs and customs of children and their families.
- **Physical facilities.** The community wants to see the construction and maintenance of a childcare center consistent with the minimum pedagogical requirements for the development of educational practices.

2.4. The Meaning of the School

As Regnault (2006) describes it, for families in the study the school "has been incorporated systematically into daily life" (page 57), and they take it for granted that going to school is a guarantee of a better future. In this respect, the parents consider the first years of education as fundamental for moving up through the system and achieving the goals they have set for their children. If children are "*to learn to read and write and to know their numbers,*" and "*to enjoy school and feel comfortable there,*" this will require parental assistance and support. One Creole teacher told us:

"I meet with the girl as often as twice a week and we talk about her progress. Her mother welcomes this approach and says she is quite content. The child is accompanied not only by her mother but also by her father and her brothers, who are attending the high school."

The school, then, is perceived as an ally for fulfilling family aspirations for their children. Fathers, mothers and siblings are therefore in constant interaction with the school, cooperating in school activities and attending meetings regularly. Children's progress is closely monitored. The school represents the future, the opportunity for a better life. The mother of a six-year-old Añú girl told us: "*I dream that she will be a great success in the life she is studying for, and I tell her to set goals and achieve them. I think she would like to be a teacher, she is always imitating the teacher.*"

Again referring to the future, the father of an eight-year-old boy declared: "*I want him to go to the university. But the teaching in this school is not very good, and we are too poor to change to another school. At home we help him with his homework. He's very bright and he could go to the university.*"

The meaning of the school is clear from the two quotations given above. It is through the school that a successful future will be assured. The appreciations of the school also conceal a "meaning," which is that the school must be of sufficient quality to achieve those goals. On this point, the findings from our study are consistent with what Regnault (2006) proposes with respect to school attendance by indigenous children and adolescents:

"the school is seen in many ways, depending on the individual: the school is a place that opens doors, the school closes other doors, the school promises, the school reprimands. The school is seen as the doorway to higher education or the baccalaureate, or at least to basic education" (page 51).

According to the teachers, the first grade of school is the obstacle that children must overcome in order to continue their schooling. "*If they do not adapt here, if they do not learn to read and write and if their parents do not cooperate, they will fail the year, they will repeat it and they will fail again, until they finally drop out*" (Creole teacher). This remark highlights the importance that teachers attached to the early grades as stages the children must complete adequately in order to move through the school system with success.

Yet for the families, the community, and in particular the children, the school also means a place for recreation and for establishing relations with other children; relations that are mediated by the status

its members earn from belonging to the institution and wearing its uniform, a distinctive sign that differentiates schoolchildren from the rest of the community. The following quote illustrates this meaning clearly:

"She likes to write and to run around, and I think that's one of the reasons she likes the school. They have a big playground where she can run around and meet up with her little friends. She also likes her uniform, she takes very good care of it, she feels like a big girl..." (mother of a six-year-old Añú girl).

In discussing their students, the teachers recognize the children's personal capacities and their leadership potential, as indicated in the case of one of the little boys studied:

"He loves to come to school and show the homework he has done. He is the first to finish the activity, and he likes to manage the games. He is the first to go out and organize the game, and sometimes he even orders the older children about... he has a lot of character" (Creole teacher).

The school also represents the future for the children. *"When I am bigger I'm going to go to high school."* The school, then, forms part of a path with successive stages for achieving an individual and family goal; it is perceived and valued as necessary. By way of illustration, the following statement by a six-year-old Añú girl about her home and the school is of interest: *"I like my house, and I like the school too, I want to have them both. I do my homework alone. I used to write big, but then I learned and now I use tiny little letters."* We can see here the closeness of the home-school relationship: both are familiar spaces for this girl, both are equally pleasant and equally important, because she learns in both.

The above quotation also shows that the girl likes the school, perhaps because it is a place where her capacities are recognized and where she feels respected.

2.5. Pros and Cons of the School

The facilitating aspects observed are the following:

- The teachers are friendly and affectionate with the children. The classroom atmosphere is relaxed and provides a pleasant climate that helps make the children at ease and comfortable in their school activities.
- The school building is spacious and well lit with ample room for different educational and recreational activities; this makes it attractive to the children, whose houses tend to be very cramped.
- River transportation is free and the trip is fun. Transport limitations on the lagoon are such that the offer of a free service encourages school attendance. Moreover, going to school on a launch with an outboard motor⁶⁶ turns the trip into a festive occasion for the children. This very specific aspect constitutes an inducement to go to school.
- Food and medical service. As noted above, the systematic food and medical service available in the schools⁶⁷ is a key aspect in promoting successful transitions for Añú children.

The negative factors observed for the following:

- Inadequate teacher training, although some teachers have diplomas, we found during various classroom visits that teachers were ill-prepared for dealing with the neediest children. There

⁶⁶ Families generally travel in homemade canoes with paddles, and this makes long trips difficult.

⁶⁷ Misión Barrio Adentro.

were shortcomings in their mastery of conceptual, procedural and attitudinal contents, and there were no specific teaching strategies for reading and writing in a social, cultural and historic space pertinent to the community and the region. The teachers betrayed inadequate academic training, no degree of specialization, and moreover we detected during interviews some problems of oral expression in responding to questions and adapting to the needs of the context.

- Denial of the Añú culture. Most teachers in the school are Creoles, a situation that does not disqualify them as educational agents. However, the teachers' denial and projection of the Añú culture renders impossible any meeting of the teacher's world and the children's world. This situation results in discriminatory practices when the teachers attempt to change "habits and customs that in their judgment distance Añú children and families from what they 'should be' as dictated by the school and by national and 'civilized' standards" (Fernandez, 2008).
- Teachers remain aloof from community problems. Most of the teachers in the school live outside the lagoon in distant towns, and this limits their participation in seeking joint solutions to local problems.
- Lack of articulation between preschool and primary levels. Although official education policy calls for curriculum coordination between the two levels, we found that in practice there is no follow-up or interchange between educational levels, and little interaction among the teachers of the different grades. Additionally, the approach to school supervision is still out of touch with the local context and stresses targets that are set in classroom operating plans prepared in faraway offices.
- There is inadequate interaction between family and school. When the school communicates with the families it is to ask for their cooperation or their attendance at meetings or to deliver qualifications. There is interaction in operational terms, then, but it is not instructive for either side, resulting in a kind of limbo in which indigenous children, their rights and their future sociocultural identity are submerged.
- Inadequate and poorly maintained educational infrastructure. The precarious physical condition of the school building, the result of a systematic lack of maintenance, is such that many areas designed for different educational activities are no longer usable. As well, the scanty furnishings revealed the neglect that the lagoon's schools have suffered at the hands of the officials responsible for keeping them in proper physical and operating condition. Similarly, the scarce learning materials and resources and their lack of cultural relevance are obstacles to children's integral development.

2.6. Expectations with Respect to the School

- Grassroots indigenous organizations want educational institutions to appreciate and value their culture. Community assemblies have put forward proposals for enhancing the integration of the school and the community. Those proposals consider such integration essential for achieving greater participation by school and community players.
- The principal expectation of the teachers is the formulation of teacher training and refresher courses, and systematic support from the Academic Training Coordination Office of the Bilingual Intercultural Education Department.
- The families focus their aspirations on the school as the means of guaranteeing social mobility and a successful future for their children.

3. Conclusions

- Transition processes, understood as changes that are governed not only biologically but also culturally and socially (Peralta, 2007), are a determining influence during the first years of life. In this respect, our study reveals some characteristics of a successful or satisfactory childhood transition from home to childcare center, and from there to school: 1. The Añú children in the study receive parental support and that of other significant adults in the community for attending educational institutions, and this gives them the confidence to feel protected and enthusiastic to learn. 2. These children enjoy school and they like their teachers as long as they are not too intimidating or standoffish. At school they communicate freely with their peers and their social, cognitive and emotional capacities are recognized by the teacher, in the context of their cultural surroundings.
- The unfavorable sociocultural and economic conditions of families of the Laguna de Sinamaica, which might constrain children's successful transitions, are offset by the presence of: 1. An affectionate, if poorly trained, teacher. 2. Families that accompany their children to school each day. 3. Children who feel protected by parental support. 4. Teachers who accord recognition to the capacities demonstrated by the children and this stimulates their desire to learn. All of these elements are a counterweight to poverty, and as a result the children selected are responding with adaptive capacity and are rising to the challenge of participating actively in their development and learning.
- The family setting and the expression of its dynamics as a socio-productive unit is another element that makes for successful transitions from home to daycare to school. It is in the family that children learn the lessons essential for their future life and for consolidating a harmonious and well-rounded personality. For example, the mother-child bond, a key feature of the Añú culture, expressed by a close relationship of the mother to the child until he or she reaches four years of age, helps to build self-confidence and to develop various cognitive skills for resolving problems, in preparation for important moments of change in the child's life.
- The enrollment of children in education centers is encouraged by the fact that those centers make the children feel at home, through the use of decorative objects prepared with cattails, the principal raw material for making textiles and other household articles. This familiarity creates bonds of identity with the school, which facilitates the transition process.
- We noted that children's families, and the mothers in particular, provided great support for their children's education, and this was reinforced by older siblings, regardless of their education level.
- The presence in the daycare center of teachers from the locality is a guarantee that the children's social and cultural needs will be recognized and respected, and this assists their educational adaptation.
- Some additional motivating elements that the school offers to awaken the interest of its students and to develop the children's learning capacities are the following: 1. Indoor spaces are ample and well lit. 2. Social interaction and possibilities for interchange with other children. 3. Promotion of nontraditional games in the school context. 4. Use of the school uniform (donated by the State) means that the children have clothing to wear to class: the uniform thus becomes an element of power vis-à-vis others, a mark of differentiation and distinction within the community. 5. The outboard motor launch provides transportation for children who otherwise could not get to school and gives them an opportunity to play on it and in the lagoon with their schoolmates. 6. Food (breakfast, lunch and snack) offered by the school and the

multihogar is also an attraction for the children as well as their parents and relatives, who see this as a guarantee of the child's right to proper nutrition. The act of feeding themselves is a moment of total change for the children, who are expected to use the table, plates, knives and forks and to comply with hygienic regulations. There is also a change in eating times and patterns, in contrast to those of the family home, but even in the multihogar some of the care mothers follow home and community practice within the school context.

4. Lessons Learned From and For Educational Policy

1. The performance of day-to-day activities proper to the indigenous family culture represents for the children a significant opportunity to gain knowledge through experience for their future life as adults. The school needs to capitalize on these learning experiences in order to make the curriculum more relevant culturally (open, flexible with the presence of the family culture), something that would encourage successful educational transitions.
2. Policymakers should attach greater importance to the family's role as education agent, and school institutions should take advantage of the family contribution in the day-to-day practice of education. For poor families where education levels are generally low, the school must play a formative role that promotes the childhood transition process.
3. Policies should also consider including guidelines for building the capacities of children and their families to deal with unfavorable situations. In this respect, resilience is an important topic to be considered in preschool and the first years of primary education.
4. Creating synergy among the different education players is imperative for children under the age of eight if they are to derive full benefit from school. This means that the school must be converted into a community whose members see themselves as apprentices in constant interaction, guided by the principles of social co-responsibility and permanent education, for the benefit of the youngest children.
5. As to the teachers, policies should call for the preparation of professional training and refresher plans that will equip them with more and better tools for high-quality early childhood education. Principals and teachers should also be sensitized and trained in the matter of transitions as a strategy for minimizing repetition, failure and dropout rates in the schools.
6. Finally, with respect to bilingual intercultural education, where the focus was for many years on primary education, this should now be shifted toward the initial education or preschool level, for the benefit of younger children. Policies should provide for better articulation of curricula, new and appropriate strategies for early childhood care and education, and new and more effective, relevant and useful ways to provide education that will take into account the childrearing norms of indigenous peoples.

Bibliography

- Amodio, E. (2005). *Pautas de Crianza entre los Pueblos Indígenas de Venezuela*. Jivi, Piara, Ye'kuana, Añú, Wayuu y Warao. Caracas: UNICEF.
- Fernández, A. (2008). *Informe Sinóptico. Pueblo Añú*. Unpublished paper. Caracas: Fundación Ensayos Para el Aprendizaje Permanente (FEPAP).
- Finol, I. (undated). *El Cacique Nigale y la Ocupación Europea de Maracaibo*.
- Peralta, M. V. (2007). *Avances del Proyecto Tendencias de las políticas de Transición en Comunidades Rurales, Indígenas y de Frontera*. Washington: OAS- Bernard van Leer Foundation.

- Regnault, B. (2006). Escuela y significados compartidos. Asistencia y Permanencia Escolar de la Niñez y Adolescencia Indígena. Caracas: UNICEF.
- Reveco, O. (2008). Transiciones del niño del hogar a la escuela en la Primera Infancia. Desafíos para las Políticas Públicas. Paper presented at the Seminar “Hacia una Primera Infancia Exitosa. Aportes desde el Estado, Familia y Comunidad”, held in Lima, Peru.
- UNESCO International Bureau of Education (2006). National profile for the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2007.

Databases

- Instituto Nacional de Estadística (2003). Censo de Población y Vivienda.
- Ministerio de Educación y Deportes (2007). Informe de Memoria y Cuenta.
- Oficina Central de Estadística e Informática (1985). Censo de población.
- Oficina Central de Estadística e Informática (1993-1994). Censo Indígena.

Chapter VI.

CONCLUSIONS AND LESSONS LEARNED

Conclusions

With respect to the central question posed for the case studies in vulnerable indigenous communities as to how children, their families and their communities experience transition processes, we may draw some conclusions that are common to all the studies. Others, however, are highly specific to each community examined.

Adults—parents and teachers—are aware of the importance of articulation for successful transitions, although in general they do not take any planned actions to this end. They seem to leave the matter rather to chance, and to situations as they arise: concerned parents and flexible teachers who "tolerate" some support from the parents, teachers who in turn improvise some articulating action based more on personal and informal initiatives than on formal institutional decisions.

In Colombia, for example, although government policy calls for significant program linkages among the nurseries (HPFs), which provide care and education for children to the age of five, there are no practical guidelines linking the nurseries to the schools and, despite progress in thinking about vertical articulation between preschool and primary, there are no specific guidelines nor any special proposals for indigenous communities.

On the basis of the Colombian case study, we may say that players in all scenarios provide support for transitions with differing levels of formality and structure. Some are more ad hoc than others, but all are intended to facilitate children's transit through these levels of socialization and preparation for learning. According to Vogler (2008), "these vertical and horizontal movements are respectively captured by the concepts of 'rites of passage' (e.g. first school day) and 'border crossings' (e.g. daily movements between home and school)."

It is interesting to note that the indigenous communities themselves have incorporated into their culture some practices that should facilitate the transition process. This is the case with the Mapuche community in Chile and the Añú and Venezuela, where certain customs clearly facilitate successful transitions.

Furthermore, the presence of teachers native to the community plays an important role in helping children adapt to the school environment.

Teachers are aware of the importance of incorporating decorative elements as well as games and teaching materials pertinent to the indigenous communities. Yet in practice these are little used, except in the Añú community of Venezuela, where the schools are fitted out with objects made from cattails, the main local raw material for textiles and other household articles. Decor of this kind creates bonds of identity and familiarity with the school, facilitating the transition process.

Teachers are not specialized in early childhood education and in some of the communities studied they know little of the local indigenous culture. Although there are indigenous teachers, and governments have declared their intention to involve them, the teachers are frequently not indigenous, and are unfamiliar with the culture of the group they are teaching.

Generally speaking, families have a special interest in their children's adaptation to nursery or school and they take steps to facilitate it, doing so in a caring and intuitive way with the cooperation of equally accommodating teachers.

The case studies such as that in Peru, which sought to explain the successful performance of children, confirmed the hypotheses expressed in the conceptual background to this study, whereby children whose parents have clear and high expectations about their education, as well as positive emotional relationships and good communication, evidence not only good transition processes but also high scholastic achievements.

The children in the Peruvian indigenous community have skills that are undeveloped in urban settings, relating above all to their mastery of their bodies, their assumption of responsibilities and cooperative work from an early age, and their ability to "read" climatic behavior from observation.

In general we may also say, as the Venezuelan researchers pointed out, that there are affectionate teachers and parents concerned with the development and education of children, and this serves to counteract poverty, so that children can adapt in response and assume the challenge of participating actively in their own development and learning.

In the case of the Añú culture, there is a close mother-child pairing until the age of four. This serves to boost self-confidence and the development of cognitive skills for resolving problems, in this way preparing the children for significant changes in their lives.

In the communities of Peru and Venezuela the older siblings were found to be playing an important role, sometimes unconsciously, in supporting and guiding their younger brothers and sisters and serving as role models to facilitate transitions.

In the community day care centers, nurseries or kindergartens, the mothers running them apply their own practices and those of the community within the school context, creating warm and welcoming environments that make it easier for young children to adapt.

Lessons Learned From and For Education Policy

- The interest shown by parents in the education of their children and their demonstrated capacity to take action in this respect suggests the need to strengthen the role of the family as an education agent, creating or reinforcing permanent articulation between family and kindergarten.
- Parents need more information about education and child development so they can set goals for their children based on realistic expectations. Working with the families must be a core component of the education process, especially in these contexts, and the sectors involved must make greater efforts to reach out to families in a coordinated way and with standard information guidelines. It is essential to strengthen linkages between the family, the kindergarten and school as an explicit strategy for reinforcing education transition processes.
- As the Peruvian researchers indicated, the education system must recognize the family in practice as the main ally for ensuring success at school and it must move beyond the utilitarian approach where parents are called upon only to clean the classroom or fix up the infrastructure but where no account is taken of their expectations, their opinions or their capacities to contribute to the objectives of the education system.
- An aspect to consider in policies is the inclusion of guidelines for developing and strengthening the capacities of children and their families to cope with unfavorable situations. In this respect, resiliency is a key theme for consideration at the preschool level and in the early years of primary education.

- Day-to-day family activities proper to the indigenous culture offer children significant opportunities to gain through experience the knowledge they will need for their future lives as adults. The school must capitalize on such learning experiences to guarantee the social and cultural pertinence of the curriculum (open, flexible and mindful of the family culture), which will promote successful educational transitions.
- It is important to learn from the processes of articulation implemented on a daily basis by mothers, kindergarten mistresses and teachers, and on this basis to establish clear guidelines for supporting these moves with better conditions for articulation and continuity in transition scenarios and actions.
- It is fundamental to support early transition processes through clear orientation and training for teachers, so that they can apply appropriate procedures at the right time. This presupposes inter-institutional coordination to establish guidelines for preparing a policy in this respect and implementing concrete and pertinent actions.
- There is a need for greater articulation in the work teachers perform within the same educational space, so as to make their work more efficient, encourage the sharing of knowledge, foster thinking about practices, and through that thinking produce new knowledge.
- Without the support of intercultural education agents intimately familiar with the language and culture of indigenous communities it is difficult to strengthen the sense of indigenous identity among children in the local kindergartens or schools.
- It is not enough for kindergarten children to visit and become familiar with the school and its classrooms, because the real break comes with the move from one methodology to the other, and it is there that the transition can be disrupted. Efforts should be directed to revising the methodologies used in the first year and seeking more subtle ways of incorporating the "workbook, pencil and eraser" methodology, reinforcing the use of more appropriate materials for working with children in grade 1.
- The education system has been dragging along in a disorderly state for years, and this has deepened the educational divide between urban and rural areas, and between the public and private spheres, a situation that must be addressed urgently.
- There are lessons to be drawn from the organizational capacity of indigenous communities: they have a participatory decision-making system and it is through this system that they frequently find answers to their problems.
- In the rural setting there are myriad opportunities for children to develop and learn. These communities have a diversity of environments and natural resources, constituting a virtual open-air learning laboratory. Yet this feature is not adequately appreciated or used by the education system, which treats learning as something that is imparted within the four walls of the school.
- When it comes to bilingual intercultural education, where the focus was for many years on primary education, this should now be shifted toward the initial education or preschool level, for the benefit of younger children. Policies should provide for better articulation of curricula, new and appropriate strategies for early childhood care and education, and new and more effective, relevant and useful ways to provide education that will take into account the childrearing norms of indigenous peoples.

Some recommendations:

1. Bring education closer to the people, i.e. improve the mechanisms for decentralizing the system.

2. Promote greater intersectoral action: while there is one sector responsible for education, the problems and factors are multiple and complex.
3. Increase the capacity for planning and managing education with a long-term horizon and a vision of the future.
4. Build a national alliance for education, especially in benefit of the most vulnerable population groups, and invest in more research to provide solid underpinnings for building a well-thought-out education system.
5. Revise and strengthen strategies for teacher training and coaching, with a comprehensive focus.

Chapter VII.

COMMUNICATION STRATEGY FOR IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

1. General Outline of the Strategy. 1.1. Background. 1.2. Rationale for the Strategy. 1.3. Early Childhood Development and its Educational, Social and Economic Impacts. 1.4. Description of the Communications Strategy. 1.4.1. Strategy Objectives. 1.4.2. Target Population. 1.4.3. Strategy Components. 1.4.4. Messages. 1.4.5. Strategy Implementation Time. 1.4.6. Action Plans. 1.4.7. Others. 2. Progress to Date: Conclusions from the Meeting with Country Communicators.⁶⁸ 2.1. Communicators' Contributions Taken from the Assessment Worksheets. 2.2. Contributions of the Communicators to the Portal of Portals on Early Childhood. 2.3. Contributions for Constructing the Communicator's Profile. 2.4. Contributions from the Communicators for Creating the Database. 2.5. Contributions for the Preparation and Publication of a Magazine Specializing in Early Childhood Issues, and Linking it to the "Inter-American Network of Early Childhood Journals" Database. 3. Experience in Implementing the Communications Strategy in Selected Countries in the Context of the Transitions Project. 3.1. Colombia. 3.1.1. Background Information. 3.1.2. General Objective. 3.1.3. Specific Objectives. 3.1.4. Methodology. 3.1.5. Description of Activities. 3.2. Peru. Introduction. 3.2.1. Progress with Activities and Initial Results. 3.3. Chile. The Current Situation in Chile. First Steps: a) Interculturalism as a Central Theme. b) Transitions.

⁶⁸ En May 2009 Chile held a meeting on the Communications Strategy, with delegates from various countries: Meeting of Communicators for the presentation of the Communications Strategy for the Improvement of Early Childhood Education Quality.

1. General Outline of the Strategy⁶⁹

1.1. Background

The Office of Education and Culture (OEC) of the Organization of American States (OAS) has been working in the field of early childhood education for more than a decade, helping to build a consensus on quality, equity and efficiency in the delivery of early childhood education services. To this end, it provides technical assistance to member states in implementing their early childhood policies; organizes meetings and seminars on technical and political aspects; and facilitates dialogue on education policies and strategies, early childhood care and development, in partnership with international organizations and NGOs active in this field: UNICEF, UNESCO, the Bernard van Leer foundation, the Andean Development Corporation, the World Bank, the World Association of Early Childhood Educators (WAECE), and the World Organization for Early Childhood Education (OMEP).

As part of its strategy, the OEC is pursuing a number of initiatives to strengthen the Hemispheric Commitment to Early Childhood adopted by OAS ministers of education in November 2007. This commitment establishes, among other things, the need to implement communication and outreach strategies on comprehensive care for young children, to promote the sharing of successful experience, and to help thereby in strengthening education and care policies.

In support of those agreements, a project is underway entitled "Expanding the Hemispheric Commitment to Early Childhood Education through Technology and Communication Networks," which seeks to raise the visibility of early childhood through scientific, economic, political and practical arguments for increased attention and investment at this stage, and to illustrate ways of achieving changes in the development, care and education of young children through public policies. The project enjoys the financial support of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) and a team of communicators who are assisting in its implementation.⁷⁰

To achieve this purpose, the project calls for designing a communication strategy to disseminate information and mobilize public support for greater involvement in high-quality care and education for young children. In its design, the strategy treats communication as an instrument that will help develop comprehensive actions and produce effective results for the benefit of girls and boys in early childhood, i.e. from birth to the age of eight.

The proposed strategy offers general guidelines and tools to communicators in the countries participating in the project for "Expanding the Hemispheric Commitment to Early Childhood Education through Technology and Communication Networks," in order to reinforce their efforts at advocacy, promotion and dissemination of information about early childhood.

⁶⁹ In May 2009 a meeting was held in Chile, with communicators from several countries, to present the communication strategy for improving the quality of early childhood education. The research project on "**Trends in transition policies in indigenous, rural and border communities**" produced results that give content to the communication strategy. It is for that reason that the strategy is included in this book, together with some of the actions taken under the strategy, focused on the issue of transitions in indigenous, rural and border communities. The strategy is merely a working document (April 2009), coordinated by Lenore Yaffee Garcia (Director, DEC/OAS), Gaby Fujimoto (Project Coordinator) and Karima Wanuz (Education Consultant) with the collaboration of Diana Pedraza of Colombia, Claudia Leiva of Chile and Consuelo Ramos of Peru.

⁷⁰ Journalists Diana Pedraza of Colombia, Claudia Leiva of Chile and Consuelo Ramos of Peru and the Peruvian consultant Karima Wanuz who joined the OAS/DEC in February 2009.

The strategy seeks to enhance linkages, interchange and collaboration between governments, researchers and academics, policy makers, international organizations and civil society, other players in education and relevant sectors (health, welfare, social development, women, family, networks etc.). It is designed to create and support a global network for presenting and sharing the most reliable, state-of-the-art information and research; to sensitize policymakers to the importance of investing in early childhood care and education; and to promote greater participation by parents, communities and the mass media. The network is expected to operate as part of the OAS Portal and will contribute to education, initial training and in-service professional development of education agents working in this field.

1.2. Rationale for the Strategy

According to Manuel Martin Serrano, communication is the ability that some living beings have to interact through the exchange of information. Communication is everything that produces a feedback (as small as it may be), it is a fundamental action for every organization, a process that originates and provides meaning to an effective interaction with the various actors that participate and benefit from it.

Under this perspective, the “Expansion of Hemispheric Commitment to Early Childhood Education through Technology and Communication Networks” Project, coordinated by the OAS Office of Education and Culture, conceives communication as a discipline that contributes to develop comprehensive actions and effective results that benefit children under the age of eight.

In this context, the “Communications Strategy for Early Childhood Educational Quality Improvement” proposes a cultural approach characterized by an educational-communicational relation that acquires an articulation and transversal condition. The strategy expects to establish messages oriented to guarantee early childhood care, promote a quality early childhood education and promote the importance of investing in early childhood to improve a country’s economy.

It proposes to design, develop and implement communication actions centered on the target populations: policy makers, national directors and early childhood care and education specialists; parents, educational agents, teachers, organizations from civil society and enterprises from each country and sub-region.

The “Communications Strategy for Early Childhood Educational Quality Improvement” has designed three main components: Information and diffusion; capacity building and advocacy, which propose communication actions addressed to create awareness, mobilize and generate public policies aimed at childhood development from a rights-related perspective. Its design suggests placing special attention on the plans proposed so that countries may select, based on their own communication level, the strategies that will allow them to develop and consolidate their efforts.

1.3. Early Childhood Development and its Educational, Social and Economic Impacts

The creation of a Communications Strategy that places early childhood as a core issue for governments and citizens, is sustained on well-founded arguments on contents related to human development, early childhood, as well as scientific, economic and health arguments.

All evidence and corroboration found in recent years, from various perspectives (cultural, psychological, economic, educational, and the neurosciences, among others), have consolidated the importance of early childhood development, care and education, from before birth, with actions of a comprehensive nature that cover every dimension of development (emotional, physical, intellectual), and in particular, the high-quality educational dimension.

Neuroscientists such as Fraser Mustard; economists such as Amartya Sen and James Heckman; educators like María Victoria Peralta and Maribel Córmack, pediatricians like Mary Eming Young, among others, have reiterated that comprehensive early childhood care, starting from a very early age, produces potentially more profitable results. Among these are a reduction in the percentage of grade repetition and school drop-outs, aggression and violence rates; and a better preparation of the human and social capital required to participate in each country's development, production and economy.

In social terms, all the unfavorable conditions associated to poverty, and which give rise to social and economic inequity, are closely linked to the inequalities in children's first stages of development and learning. The inability to break the vicious cycle of poverty is to maintain the poorest children lagging behind the more privileged ones.

Stimulation from the moment of birth, and education in the early years of life result in more successful students, who are more competent in creating social interactions and in their emotions, displaying higher verbal and intellectual development than those not who did not have quality early education. Therefore, guaranteeing healthy early childhood development is an investment in the country's future active population and in its ability to attain economic and social progress.

From an economic perspective, there is also evidence to justify that early childhood spending is profitable and represents an excellent future wager. Amartya Sen, 1998 Nobel Prize for economic science laureate, reached this conclusion when he stated "indeed, the quality of childhood has importance not only for what happens in childhood, but also for future life. Investments in early childhood are important in their own right because they pave the way for a lifetime of improved health, mental and physical performance, and productivity"⁷¹.

In keeping with this same premise, US researcher James Heckman, who was awarded the Nobel Prize in economic science in 2000, has concluded that every dollar spent on preschool will produce an eight-fold return when the individual becomes an adult (eight to one), a return much higher than every dollar spent on high school and university education programs (three to one).

The above leads us to think that early childhood development can be considered to be the best and most effective intervention option in order to help poorer and more vulnerable children, together with their families, communities and nations to break out of the vicious circle of poverty. However, early childhood programs will have to be a strategic part of these countries' educational policies in order to achieve this purpose.

1.4. Description of the Communications Strategy

Development of the Communications Strategy is based in every research and scientific finding related to early childhood, therefore, the communicational approach is from a cultural perspective, which means that interaction processes are full of meaning and involve the sphere of daily life, social and cultural dynamics, the public sphere, and collective sensitivities and identities.

⁷¹ Myers, Robert. "The twelve who survive". YPSILANTI, MI: High/Scope Press, 1992, 1995. Taken from: Sen, Amartya and Brundtland, Gro Harlem. "Breaking the Poverty cycle. Investing in Early childhood". Inter-American Development Bank, Sustainable Development Department, Social Development Division. Keynote Addresses. Paris, 14 March 1999.

From this viewpoint, communication is understood as omnipresent: it is found in each and every act performed by humankind; it traverses the social fabric and constructs reality⁷². This implies that society, as a fabric and network of relationships, is sustained in communicational structures and exchanges that are significant within specific cultural contexts.

Assuming communication from this stance implies bearing in mind Martin Serrano's mediations theory, which he defines as the activity that places limits to what may be said, and to the way of saying it, by means of an order system. In this sense, all the political and social scaffolding that surrounds early childhood enables focusing the strategy on various hierarchical steps that will allow a direct contact with the different social actors that intervene it.

The messages issued by the different communication groups in each country, from the starting point of this strategy, must be drawn up based on an action plan aiming at very clear objectives with a view to consolidate the established goal in the communication component.

1.4.1 Strategy Objective

Promotion and diffusion of the importance of early childhood educational quality through communication actions aimed at achieving sensitization, advocacy, social mobilization and the generation of public policies and actions relevant to early childhood.

1.4.2. Target Population

In the strategy's general guidelines, the State and Civil Society were defined as target population to begin consolidating the communication component, which we have featured according to their role:

State:

- Ministries (Education, Childhood, Health, Women, Social Sector, and Finance, among others): Within their sectors, they make decisions on policies related to early childhood.
- Local Governments (Municipalities, Mayors, Governors, Regional Governments, among others). They are fundamental for the work in localities.
- Congress: Allows the development of legislative proposals related to the issue.

Civil society:

- Non-Governmental Organizations linked to the issue of early childhood. They contribute to a more effective circulation of the information, as they have a structure in place that may be very useful for these activities.
- Academic sector (researchers, scientists, etc.). Their knowledge and data handling may add to the development of actions aimed at early childhood.
- Opinion leaders: They are an extremely effective information channel, as they reach a tremendous amount of people and in a very good way.
- Educational community: (Teachers, parents, children): These are groups that need information that will help them and their families.

⁷² Peter Berger & Thomas Luckmann define reality and social construction of reality from the relationships that are formed every day between human beings, where communication has a direct incidence. Peter L. Berger, Thomas Luckmann. *Social construction of reality*, Buenos Aires, Amorrortu, 1993, pp. 13 to 15.

- **Mass Media:** Are extremely important in diffusion activities, bearing in mind their great power to reach the most remote places. It is deemed that the need to educate the media on these issues is extremely necessary.
- **Entrepreneurial Associations:** Creating alliances with companies that carry out social responsibility actions related to early childhood will be a great contribution.

1.4.3. Strategy Components

Conceiving the strategy implies taking into account its possible effects, and these are related to the levels of involvement and participation granted to the project's target population. Bearing in mind these referents, the Communications Strategy has three components, each of them with specific objectives, actions and products:

Component 1: Information and diffusion

Involves transferring information on the importance of early childhood through mass media as a way to position the issue in the political, social and cultural agenda. Experience shows that the work performed with the media and electronic media enables a prompt political and social recognition of the issue, as they are considered strategic allies. This component requires having as a basic development guideline that radio, press, television and Internet, which means understanding the texts, the narrative, grammar, iconic processes and their social use;⁷³ thus envisaging the esthetic of the media that are, by their very nature, social, and the study and analysis of these contemporaneous views leads to a social integration and participation view. Thus, it is possible to view the relation of the media with daily life configuration, and the individual experience with education, with the forms of pleasure, fear, idleness, fun, i.e., all the spheres in which the media intervene in the way in which individuals relate to one another in social life within differentiation and diversity of the different social groups..

In making reference to the media one begins to make contact with scaffolding laden with significance, with the production they issue, with the levels of reception they generate and with the impact they cause in each individual's social projection. This component includes:

- Preparation of a press dossier to provide information on the campaign.
- Coordination with mass media for the issue's diffusion.
- Design and implementation of press conference for the launching of the "Communications Strategy for Early Childhood Educational Quality Improvement."
- Design, edition and publishing of a magazines specializing in early childhood.
- Preparation and design of a portal to promote and spread early childhood-related issues.

Component 2: Capacity building

This component does not only contribute to the knowledge and management of the issue, but also how it is addressed, intervened and its lobbying on the implementation of effective actions for early childhood. In this context, a human being is required who can assume the role of transforming him or herself and his or her surroundings, so that he or she may guarantee products with high production of

⁷³ For further information on the media languages, see **Chris Goddard y Bernadette J. Saunders**. "Child abuse and the media", documents forming part of The role of the media, in *Project Axis: Child Sexual Abuse in Queensland: Selected Research Papers*, Queensland Crime Commission, Brisbane in *Child Abuse Prevention Issue*, n.º 14, 2001.
<http://www.aifs.gov.au/nch/issues/issues14.html>

meaning, enabling cultural creativity, the ability to give an account of reality, starting by the identification and a consistent priority of his needs. A journalist, a state employee, an opinion leader will then become the professional who will promote and organize everyday reflections in relation with early childhood. This fact partially explains why these individuals' leadership role and impact in the community must be fundamental, as they are the ones to put into motion processes that will retrieve the historical-cultural perspective and manage to attain the generation of new participation options in the media sphere.

The authorities, opinion leaders, communicators and journalists must be able to propose policies and programs for early childhood care, they must be able to put them into motion, and oversee their implementation, while achieving mechanisms of information and interaction between them. For these purposes, the strategy has considered developing:

- Training sessions for State and municipal authorities in charge of the early childhood area and the actions they must meet with respect to this issue.
- Training sessions for State and municipal governments' heads of communication on early childhood.
- Training sessions for opinion leaders and representatives from non governmental organizations on the importance of investing in early childhood.
- Training sessions for journalists from mass media on the issue of early childhood and the importance of investing in this age group.

Component 3: Advocacy

This is the means of achieving political and social support to the strategically programmed activities, in order to attain awareness, social mobilization and the generation of public policies. Here, the idea is that the actors, from their various levels and roles, become involved and build capacities for lobbying and care of early childhood. This is an area in which the authorities, opinion leaders and journalists link the actions in favor of early childhood and access to decision-making processes. To speak of advocacy is to speak of immediateness, of realities, representations and, above all, of particular languages and logics that have been construed from different perspectives and with specific mental scripts⁷⁴ in accordance with the experience of each information producer. In advocacy, multiple forms of interaction are used that provide access to decision-making circles, while simultaneously making visible the problems and needs of the population; they are ways to have access to knowledge produced at a world and local level, they disseminate political, cultural and economic meanings that draw a country together, and they circulate the proposals on new development scenarios. This component has envisaged:

⁷⁴ Guillermo Orozco uses the concept of script to explain four moments that intervene in the reception by an individual of the communication contents, either in a face to face relationship or from a media perspective. The script is a map from where understanding arises and is produced and it is a "representation of a hierarchical ordered event, typically organized toward the attainment of a goal or a set of goals". Orozco distinguishes: 1) The cognoscitive script, or the individual form of mediation that points to the way in which the individual knows and updates a cognitive script. In cognoscitive terms, three spheres may be defined: abilities, knowledge and beliefs. Abilities imply a practical knowledge or know how to do. Knowledge implies knowing something. And beliefs fundamentally mean believing in something, which may be independent to knowing about that something or to knowing how to do it. 2) The cultural script, which refers to the set of influences that structure the learning process and its results. 3) The institutional script, which refers to the way in which institutions attempt to socialize their members. Institutions use various resources to implement their mediation. Among them, power and rules are some of the strategies, as well as negotiation procedures; material and spatial conditions also serve institutional goals, and 4) The technological script, which acknowledges the autonomy and specificity of a media such as television, the effectiveness of its narratives and languages, as well as the high degree of veracity and representation possibilities. See Guillermo Orozco Gómez. "Televidencia. Perspectivas para el análisis de los procesos de recepción televisiva" (TV watching. Perspective for the analysis of the television reception processes, in *Cuadernos de comunicación y prácticas sociales*, n.º 6, México, Universidad Iberoamericana, 1994, pp. 75 to 80.

- The creation of an Inter-institutional Network for Early Childhood made up by state and civil society representatives to create commitments and carry out lobbying and advocacy activities and to position the issue in the public agenda.
- Creation of a Network of Early Childhood Communicators made up by communicators representing the state and civil society to carry out lobbying and advocacy activities aimed at placing the issue on the public agenda.
- Implementation of a Communications Campaign “First, Early Childhood” aimed at creating awareness on authorities and families about the importance of providing care to children under the age of eight.

1.4.4. Messages

Messages are articulated in codes and sign systems that allow expressing ideas to give an intelligible form to the contents. Therefore, to talk about a message is to relate infinity of concepts that, at the moment of being expressed, have significance in the social setting in which it is inscribed. Ferdinand de Saussure defined significance as the relation between the sign and its referential⁷⁵ reality. In producing a message it is necessary to bear in mind the language in which it is expressed. Chilean producer Valerio Fuenzalida characterizes audio-visual language as the “ludic-affective language,” differentiating it from the “read and written language” that requires a formal rationale that makes it analytic differentiator, abstract, rationalizing and linear. Images are polysemic because they do not have a single or stable meaning, as their sense depends on who construes them, who reads them or interprets them, of the media used for communicating them and the cultural environment in which such communication is produced. With this in mind, the following messages have been set forth:

- Early childhood care guarantees a healthy development for children under six years old.
- Stimulating children during their early years empowers their abilities.
- Quality early education permits higher verbal and intellectual development.
- Investing in early childhood contributes to improve a country’s economy.

1.4.5. Strategy Implementation Time

It is in this manner that we have raised a three-year time frame that pursues the general goal of promoting and disseminating the early childhood issue through communication actions aimed to create awareness, social mobilization and the generation of public policies. To achieve this goal, general and specific targets have been designed for every moment of the strategy, which is divided as follows:

⁷⁵ Barbero and Silva in their text *Proyectar la comunicación (Projecting communication)* propose that Ferdinand de Saussure in his work *Cours de linguistique générale* (Course on General linguistics) (1916) sets forth the basis of sign study. The linguistic sign is presented as part of a system in which formal units (Significants) unite with those of contents (meanings) to produce communication forms: for Saussure language should be studied in itself, without mixing theoretical or referential assumptions, looking at its own reality on the construction of its formal system, so that the concept of form would be understood as the study of a language’s structure. To separate the word from the “thing” it alludes to (reference) could have constituted the great revolution of his proposal, because that is how language can speak of its own constitutive reality: how it produces in verbal signs its own reference. However, it was André Martinet (1960) who was able to perfect the model according to which formal and material aspects alternate, proposing the most precise notion of the “double articulation of language”. Everything to which the double articulation model is, by principle, language. Thus one can understand the development that would lead to the birth of a new discipline whose object would be constituted by all sign systems operating in social life and that for Saussure shall be called semiology. Another language field is thus born. See Barbero and Silva. *Proyectar la comunicación*, cit., pp. 191 and 192.

First year: The strategy is designed and adjusted according to each country's possibilities. A preliminary diagnosis must be drawn up of the entities, officers, organizations and leaders interested in promoting early childhood from the abovementioned perspective. Once this diagnosis is completed, a database must be created, to create a directory of key persons that may offer information, spread it and disseminate it. A directory must also be made of journalists who are *friends of early childhood*, who must be sensitized on the issue through workshops and talks, so they may come closer and thus make a social commitment.

Second year: A strategy should be implemented in this period, contemplating:

- Preparation of objectives to be transmitted.
- Advocacy in various levels where the issue of early childhood is a priority.
- Preparation of messages in various formats to start to position early childhood.
- Use of mass media through editorials, and opinion columns by specialists.
- Preparation of media proposals placing early childhood as the protagonist, as a subject of rights.
- Ongoing evaluation and adjustment of this implementation stage.

Third year: In this period early childhood should be positioned and consolidated in the agenda, by promoting advocacy, exchange of information with key actors, the creation of a database of leaders on the issue and having networks of scientists, specialists, social communicators, journalists and opinion leaders so as to sustain the early childhood agenda in society. Participation in events and the dissemination of new scientific findings, and direct contact with opinion leaders will contribute to consolidate the strategy.

1.4.6. Action Plans

Component 1: Information and diffusion

Results of Action Plan 1: Informed and sensitized public opinion on early childhood through mass media.

1.1. Preparation of (01) press dossier to provide more specific details on the campaign. Aimed to capture the interest of journalists. It includes full information on the campaign.

1.1.1. Building messages for dossier (written and/or in CDs)

1.2. Coordination with mass media for diffusion. The goal is to position the topic in mass media to place it in the public agenda.

1.2.1 Preparation of news briefs and journalistic reports on early childhood in (04) television media

1.2.2. Preparation of news briefs and interviews on early childhood in (04) radio media.

1.2.3. Preparation of press notes and special reports on early childhood in (04) written media.

1.3. Design and implementation of Press Conference for the Launching of the "Communications Strategy for Early Childhood Educational Quality Improvement." The aim is to inform on the scope of the campaign through mass media.

1.3.1. Preparation of press notes to launch the Strategy

1.3.2. Dissemination in (06) mass media.

1.4. Design, edition and publication in a magazines specialized on early childhood.

1.5. Preparation and design of a new on-line portal specialized in childcare and education to collect and disseminate information, effective practices, research, training courses, links to key information resources, and experts in the region. This portal, to be presented in English and Spanish, would link and contribute to the OAS Portal, Red Latinoamericana de Portales Educativos (RELPE), the World Association of Early Childhood Educators Portal and others, as soon as it is operational. (Result 2 of Hemispheric Project)

1.5.1 Design of portal structure

1.5.2 Preparation of three databases: one with childcare and education experts from Member States, another with collaborations, links to portals and websites and existing networks, and a third with significant experiences in Member States.

1.5.3 Dispatch of bimonthly newsletters on early childhood..

Component 2: Capacity building

Result of Action Plan 2: State authorities, municipal authorities, heads of communication, opinion leaders, non-governmental organization representatives, parents, researchers, teachers and children trained in early childhood issues to oversee, disseminate, influence and implement ongoing actions in favor of children under eight years of age.

2.1 (07) Training sessions addressed to State and municipal authorities, heads of communication, opinion leaders, non-governmental organization representatives, parents, researchers, teachers and children, to strengthen their knowledge on early childhood and to undertake actions to promote the importance of caring for children under the age of eight. This workshop aims to provide appropriate and necessary information to the beneficiaries. The Training session is planned to take place in four hours.

2.1.1. (01) Training session addressed to (20) State and municipal authorities in charge of the early childhood on the activities they must carry out on the issue.

2.1.2. (01) Training session addressed to (10) State and municipal government chiefs of communication on early childhood.

2.1.3. (01) Training session addressed to (20) opinion leaders and non-governmental organizations working on early childhood on the importance of investing in early childhood.

2.1.4. (01) Training session addressed to (10) mass media journalists on the early childhood and the importance of investing in this group.

2.2. Preparation of training and dissemination material aimed to create awareness on, affect, oversee and attract attention to early childhood issues.

2.2.1. Preparation of journalistic summaries based on early childhood research.

2.2.2. Preparation of (1,000) manuals on early childhood.

2.2.3. Design and publication of (1,000) handbooks on political lobbying for addressing the early childhood issue.

- 2.2.4. Design and publication of (1,000) handbooks for journalists.
- 2.2.5. Design and publication of (1,000) handbooks for communicators.
- 2.2.6. Design and publication of (1,000) informative diptychs.
- 2.2.7. Design and publication of (1,000) posters on early childhood.
- 2.2.8. Design and publication of (1,000) stickers on early childhood.
- 2.2.9. Production and edition of (01) video on early childhood situation.

Component 3: Advocacy

Result of Action Plan 3: State and civil society childhood-related networks, undertake advocacy actions geared to create social awareness on early childhood.

3.1 Creation of (01) Inter-institutional Early Childhood Network composed of (10) State and civil society representatives to generate commitments and carry out lobbying and advocacy actions to position the issue in the public agenda. This activity aims to create advocacy and lobbying capacities in authorities of the various sectors.

- 3.1.1 Preparation of (01) database of State institutions working on childhood issues.
- 3.1.2 Preparation of (01) database of civil society institutions working on childhood issues.
- 3.1.3 (03) Work sessions to foster the creation of (01) Early Childhood Inter-Institutional Network.
- 3.1.4 Consultancy and follow-up to define advocacy actions for early childhood care.

3.2 Creation of (01) Early Childhood Communicators Network composed of (10) communicators representing State and civil society to carry out advocacy and lobbying actions to place the issue in the public agenda. This activity aims to commit communicators to develop advocacy capacities to promote mobilization initiatives for early childhood care.

- 3.2.1 Preparation of (01) database of heads of communications of the various State sectors working on childhood issues.
- 3.2.2 Preparation of (01) database of heads of communications of key Civil Society organizations working on the childhood issue.
- 3.2.3 (03) Work sessions to boost the creation of (01) Early Childhood Communicators Network
- 3.2.4 Consultancy and follow-up to define early childhood care advocacy actions.

3.4 Implementation of (01) Communications Campaign: "First, Early Childhood" aimed at creating awareness in authorities and families on the importance of early childhood care for children under the age of six, through (06) media reports and (01) Artistic Festival (song, dance and poetry). This campaign aims to make the early childhood issue visible and to create awareness in local and community authorities.

- 3.4.1 (06) Reports on the early education issue in mass media.
- 3.4.2 (01) Artistic Festival aimed to create awareness on early childhood care.
- 3.4.3 (08) Dissemination materials for the Communications Campaign.

1.4.7. Others

The strategy as defined covered other aspects in great detail, such as goals, indicators and a timeline for each of the planned activities under the different components. These may be consulted in the document published at the OAS webpage. It also included an annex with some conceptual discussions and further information on some of the planned activities, such as the mounting of the Early Childhood Portal.⁷⁶

2. Progress to Date: Conclusions from the Meeting with Country Communicators⁷⁷

A meeting with communicators from Spain, Nicaragua, Argentina, Mexico, Colombia, Peru, Chile, Surinam, and Trinidad and Tobago was held in Chile from May 25 to 29, 2009. This meeting considered and analyzed the working document setting out the conceptual guidelines for the Communications Strategy for Improving the Quality of Early Childhood Education, presented by the OAS group.

After three working sessions, the plenary group drew the following conclusions:

- Communication must be conceived as a discipline that permeates the entire conception of early childhood. This point was recognized in the OAS working document.
- The objectives proposed in the strategy were assessed by the countries.
- It was agreed to apply the three components of the strategy (Dissemination of Information, Capacity Development, and Advocacy), bearing in mind the activities underway in the countries. It was suggested that experiments in this area should be tracked.
- With respect to communication products, mention was made of the "Seven is Too Late" communication campaign in Turkey, and Guatemala's experiment with the International Children's Fund (today the Christian Children's Fund), recognizing that these experiments have had a great impact in each country.
- The planned duration of the strategy was assessed and the group agreed that it would be sufficient to achieve its objectives.
- Country delegates declared their interest in and commitment to developing a strategy whereby they would undertake to contact communicators who could lead this process in each country.
- In light of the activities proposed in the strategy, the group of communicators from different countries agreed on the need to consolidate the database as well as dynamic collaboration networks that would allow for smooth communication.
- With respect to the portal and the magazine, this was considered a very forward-looking and important initiative for channeling information not only to receptors but also to emitters.
- There is a need to articulate the communications strategy with the activities underway in each country.

⁷⁶ See OAS document "COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION QUALITY IMPROVEMENT", Leading Team: Lenore Yaffee Garcia (Director, DEC/OEA), Gaby Fujimoto (Project Coordinator), Karima Wanuz (Education Consultant), Team of communicators: Claudia Leiva (JUNJI - Chile), Consuelo Ramos (Acción por los Niños - Perú), Diana Mireya Pedraza (Colombia).

⁷⁷ In May 2009 a meeting was held in Chile, with communicators from several countries, to present the communication strategy for improving the quality of early childhood education

After confirming their commitment and availability and the need to carry out this strategy, country delegates offered specific input to each process. They also participated actively in preparing the assessment worksheets for consolidating perceptions about the strategy, the communicator profile, and specific activities of each country.

2.1. Communicators' Contributions Taken from the Assessment Worksheets

With respect to communication activities, the eight participants highlighted the importance of lobbying in order to reach policymakers. They also noted the need to have a materials production line that would help to consolidate and manage knowledge of the players in early childhood issues. It was suggested that the strategy should include the production of manuals for communicators, offering general guidelines for awareness raising about the issue and determining how to implement the strategy in each country. On the other hand, it was important to make use of the technical possibilities of the Internet to publicize early childhood issues. On this point, participants agreed that websites such as YouTube and Facebook, social networks that reach millions of users, could be used to publicize activities.

In terms of high-impact activities proposed by participants in the communicators' seminar, we may note that those suggested included holding world congresses on early childhood and pursuing campaigns with companies identified with the issue, designed to have a strong impact on public opinion and thus help position the topic.

As to advocacy activities, participants agreed to conduct surveys or opinion polls among parents, teachers and authorities to appreciate their understanding or handling of the issue. Advocacy efforts could include the distribution of newsletters on various aspects relating to early childhood. Nor should we overlook training for players, recognizing that it is essential to strengthen their knowledge for dealing with the issue and for carrying out high-impact advocacy activities.

When it came to relations with the media, the group agreed on the need to sponsor training sessions for journalists to raise their awareness of the issue and help them handle the information properly, as well as to supply data for reports. It was also important to identify alternative media, including institutional media, that could publicize early childhood issues.

To catch the attention of the mainstream and alternative media it was essential to maintain ongoing contact with them, and to deliver a constant stream of useful and attractive information to journalists for inclusion in their commissioned writings.

With respect to activities and products suggested for inclusion in the strategy, there was agreement on the need to establish key messages with strong ideas for positioning early childhood issue. Slogans were also useful for giving force to publicity actions.

It was likewise suggested that a network of early childhood journal publishers and editors should be established for disseminating research and activities on early childhood. Another point suggested for inclusion in the strategy was to sponsor a prize or competition for journalists in order to foster attention to early childhood issues.

Suggestions relating to implementation of the strategy started with the need for clarity in the messages, training for the various players, analyzing the target audience, understanding legislation on early childhood, and developing public relations. Players and their commitments were another aspect assessed by the communicators, who agreed on the need to work with parents, teachers, children, communicators, journalists, politicians and decision makers.

An important point included in the assessment worksheets and addressed during the working session was the need to establish the profile of the communicator who would be responsible for implementing the strategy; that person should be a professional in communication matters with a specialty in early childhood issues, in order to give greater impact to communications.

2.2. Contributions of the Communicators to the Portal of Portals on Early Childhood

The presentation on the portal's structure (Annex 2) evoked suggestions for building a web space that would position the early childhood issue. Communicators in the workshop agreed on the need to have a portal and not just a webpage: a portal is intended to encourage participation by the final user, i.e. it is interactive and much more dynamic, and can not only provide information but receive it as well.

Recognizing this, a number of conclusions were drawn with respect to the portal, such as the need to understand the mechanisms for supplying information for the portal in each country. There was concern as to how to establish the commitment and the times for delivering information.

As to the structure of the portal, it was suggested that the target audience should be limited in order to deliver the message more effectively. For example, that audience should not include children and adolescents, as they do not look for information of this kind on the Web. Another important point was the need for the portal strategy to include ways of raising its visibility in the various search engines available on the Web, so that users seeking information on early childhood will find the portal as the first option offered.

Another proposal was that there should be a multimedia gallery where visitors can access photographic or audiovisual materials.

2.3. Contributions for Constructing the Communicator's Profile

- The workshop with the communicators and the contributions offered in the appreciation worksheets provided some characteristics for constructing the profile.
- The communicator must be a communications professional.
- The communicator must be sensitive to the issue of early childhood and must have solid credentials.
- The communicator must be able to understand and handle key messages dealing with early childhood.
- The communications work must be coordinated with specialists in the topic.
- The communicator must always have an active role.
- A social communicator must have the ability to maintain close contact and work with the mass media.
- The communicator must understand that the mass media can be used not only to disseminate activities but also to educate public opinion and urge action by the authorities.

2.4. Contributions from the Communicators for Creating the Databases

A network must be created to respond to the various needs and contribute to education, initial training and in-service professional development for early childhood teachers and caregivers.

Consequently, the project will sponsor a "network of networks" developed as part of the OAS Education Portal of the Americas.

The central objective was defined to:

Define mechanisms to maximize use of information and communication technologies to improve learning, foster equity, and support transnational cooperation in the hemisphere.

Specific objectives:

- **To create networks of collaboration** among specialists, politicians, parents, communities, civil society and businesses so they can connect with each other and work jointly in an interdisciplinary way, through the relevant sectors (health, welfare, women's networks etc.).
- **To contribute to the exchange of information and enhance regional cooperation** and integration in the area of early childhood care and education.
- **To consolidate a "network of networks"** as part of the OAS Education Portal of the Americas.
- **To reinforce linkages and collaboration** between governments, researchers and academics, policy makers, international organizations, and other players in education and other sectors, inviting them to participate in developing feasible proposals for responding to the challenges of providing high-quality care and education in the region, with special attention to the most vulnerable populations.

In this context, it was noted that, in addition to a communication, social mobilization and advocacy strategy and an information portal, the project would design and develop three databases:

1. A database of early childhood care and education experts in member countries;
2. A database on collaboration, links to portals and existing networks;
3. A database on significant experiments in member states relating to priority issues, defined by ministries of education in their guidelines for early childhood education programming.

Following development of the "portal of portals" included in the project, which must be conceived in a Web 2.0 design style, the databases will become effective cooperative networks.

2.5. Contributions for the Preparation and Publication of a Magazine Specializing in Early Childhood Issues, and Linking it to the "Inter-American Network of Early Childhood Journals" Database

Day-to-day communication is conducted via networks that link communities and interests around fields such as early childhood, in our case, and more specifically the academic output and publications that arise from studies and research in centers dedicated to this issue in the Americas.

The success of these networks depends on having suitable policies for exchanging information and making adequate use of new information technologies that are constantly emerging, as well as implementing participatory strategies worked out among all players involved in these communication dynamics.

It is for this reason that we propose an agenda as a starting point for creating the Inter-American Network of Early Childhood Journals, the purpose of which is to compare different experiences with

magazines dealing with early childhood, both those focused on academic research and those targeted at public policies.

General objective:

The intent is to provide a forum or meeting place for editors, publishers and researchers of scientific periodicals on children in countries of the hemisphere, and putting them in touch with the most important international magazines in this area.

The immediate objective is to share and coordinate protocols for publishing articles (using the peer review system) and procedures for indexing, including the national and international quality indices and editorial systems used.

In our case, the creation of the Inter-American Network of Early Childhood Journals is intended to encourage the dynamic interchange of information, experience and processes arising from local experiments that can be shared through various mechanisms such as physical and virtual meetings and the promotion of online communication systems.

Additional objectives of the Inter-American Network of Early Childhood Journals

- a. Continuous training plan.
- b. Visibility.
- c. Access to top-ranked indexing systems.
- d. Evaluation of articles.
- e. Strategies for strengthening the network.
- f. Exchanges and development of institutions' collections.

a) Continuous training plan

One objective of the network should be the ongoing sharing of experience, keeping its members up to date in all matters related to the publishing process. To this end, workshops and courses, in both classroom and virtual format, should be part of an ongoing agenda planned by a team responsible for training. Aspects such as the index and digest systems of different countries, new evaluation methodologies, processes of writing scientific articles to the most demanding standards, new ways for committees and other editorial governance bodies to have a real impact on journal contents, etc., are key points that must be borne in mind in these forums, and particularly in the launch of this network.

b) Visibility⁷⁸

The objectives of the network must include, first and foremost, giving global visibility to the knowledge products of the social sciences in America. If we do not give our researchers recognition, no one will do it for us. We are a community of millions of English, Spanish, Portuguese and French speakers, and we share cultural realities that unite us across languages.

Childhood studies in America will be greatly disadvantaged if we do not generate more cooperation and visibility among researchers and academics. Achieving good impact indices is complicated, as citations are generally confined to the highest-impact journals, where top-ranking researchers seek to publish their articles. This tends to create consolidated networks of journal citations

⁷⁸ This and the following sections are taken from an interview with Wilson López, editor of *Universitas Psicológica* in Colombia. The interview was published by FIAP and can be found (in Spanish) at http://www.infocop.es/view_article.asp?id=2162&cat=39

and makes it difficult to achieve a good level of citation in our languages. To achieve this objective we must ensure high-quality processes, encourage visibility and consolidate our linguistic communities. Cooperation is a much better option here than competition. Editors, publishers, academics and researchers must therefore help consolidate the use and citation of our journals.

We must make it a fundamental objective for our journals to articulate efforts in this direction. The way we communicate is vital to the dynamics of constructing our culture, and this is the core that produces wealth in knowledge- and information-based economies.

Some members of our academic and scientific community have looked mainly to the Anglo-Saxon world for their sources, yet we must recognize that childhood studies have grown and developed here in Latin America. There is now a drive to ensure that the resources generated through the free-access approach will bring us together so that we can generate knowledge for the scientific world and construct policies for using the cultural synergies we are building to make our problems and the way we address them more visible. One of the common social concerns of mankind is the situation of children, which constitutes a fundamental challenge for achieving structurally peaceful, more inclusive, tolerant, caring, participatory, environmentally sustainable societies with a better quality of life.

c) Access to high-level indexation systems

To be part of the selective and demanding databases that constitute the worldwide benchmark for the identification and classification of the journals of highest quality and greatest global impact has become a central priority for researchers, associations, institutions and journals, and especially for those persons and entities involved directly in the research and production of scientific knowledge. Those databases include the *Science Citation Index*, the *Social Science Citation Index* and the *Arts and Humanities Citation Index*, *Science*, and the *Institute for Scientific Information*.

Consequently, a key objective must be to ensure inclusion in indexes of this type. This poses a challenge for our journals, institutions and editorial teams to continue improving and expanding possibilities for placing the knowledge we generate in top-ranking international databases.

d) Evaluation of articles

A frequent concern of journals is to establish committees of qualified and dynamic peer reviewers who can speed the evaluation process and meet the requirements of the bodies that classify journals in different countries. The shortage of experts in certain issues and a tendency to "inbreeding" make editorial work at this stage a slow and exhausting affair.

It has been suggested on various occasions that journals should share their rosters of experts. This should be an important topic of discussion in this forum, for adoption as a common editorial policy among members of the network. The peer reviewers could be organized by nationality and area of expertise.

Another topic for discussion is the sharing of different evaluation methodologies in use, with a view to qualifying and standardizing them to some extent so as to facilitate the coordination of work and make networking more dynamic. Thought could be given to creating a "style manual" for evaluating scientific articles about childhood.

e) Strategies for strengthening the network

The network to be established must have solid foundations that will allow for continuity and constant feedback on activities. A coordinating group will have to be appointed, representing the participating countries, with very specific functions and objectives. The standing agenda of the network must give priority to reaching agreements to pool human, technological and economic resources in implementing network projects. A webpage for the network is proposed, one that would provide prompt and accurate information on all activities undertaken, and could be headed by a communications committee.

The meeting of childhood journal editors and publishers should also be part of a permanent agenda of face-to-face meetings in countries participating in the network, as well as virtual meetings according to a timetable established on the basis of the action plans.

There should be discussion of other financing possibilities for journals arising from coordinated initiatives among all members of the network.

f) Exchanges and development of institutional collections

We should recognize the cost-benefit advantages of exchanges among the collections of our institutions. There should be a clear policy on exchanges so as to keep the interchanges over the network flowing smoothly in a clear, balanced and symmetrical manner.

Traveling exhibitions of journals could also be programmed at the headquarters of institutions in member countries of the network; this could be coordinated by the communications team. Thought should also be given to holding virtual exhibitions with promotional campaigns involving work teams that would participate in online forums to produce proposals and documents that would enrich the work of the network.

Country delegates have raised questions that must be further examined in order to keep the network flowing smoothly.

3. Experience in Implementing the Communications Strategy in Selected Countries in the Context of the Transitions Project

With respect to the case studies under the research project on *Trends in Transition Policies in Indigenous, Rural and Border Communities*, the countries involved in the project have begun to promote some of the activities called for in the General Communication Strategy and in the documents setting forth the results of the recent meeting of communicators in Chile (May 2010), described in sections 1 and 2 of the present chapter. The following section describes progress and achievements in three countries of the project: Colombia, Peru and Chile.

3.1. Colombia⁷⁹

3.1.1. Background Information

For Colombia, a communications strategy for socializing the outcomes from the first phase and the case study must begin by recognizing that public officials, parents and all citizens directly involved with children up to eight years must understand, consider and commit themselves to the integral care, education and protection of children.

⁷⁹ Manager: Dana Pedraza, communicator.

It was also very important for Colombia to specify the theoretical starting points for a communications approach. This leads to the following proposals:

1. A communication strategy for socializing the outcomes from the first phase and the case study must begin by recognizing that public officials, parents and citizens directly involved with children up to eight years must accept the challenge of becoming culture workers; this means re-signifying their daily practice and then assuming the meaning and identity of the role in early childhood transitions. Antonio Gramsci, in describing the role of intellectuals as transformers of society, speaks of the need to restore the human being to its identity, its historic function, and the recognition of self and others. Gramsci also calls for understanding culture as the sphere of creation and transformation, in which men's actions can have an influence; in this respect, teachers, community leaders and parents have a proactive role (Giroux, 1983. p. 41). Because of this, we must begin by understanding communication as a discipline that moves beyond the utilitarian to complement all the processes of theoretical and practical construction that lead to the transformation of transitions as moments of opportunity in early childhood.
2. Communication is a complex field in which there are different perspectives, depending on the starting point of the analysis: for many it is only the production of messages, for others it is the realm of the audiences, but the most widely socialized concept is that communication is about the transmission of messages, the transfer of contents. This communication effort must go beyond the well-trodden road of clearing away simplistic concepts and enter into the conception of communication as a field for considering complexity from the viewpoint of the person who produces, the person who receives, and the horizon of the culture, which allows the negotiation of meanings.
3. In order to explain the purpose of the audiovisual narrative used in the project on "transition policies in indigenous, rural and border communities" as a teaching strategy for disseminating academic findings, socializing case studies, and encouraging stakeholders to speak up in different scenarios, we had to resort to a **multimedia** design that would articulate the different processes experienced within the project, and could also include the socialization exercises that were conducted through face-to-face forums that allowed active participation by stakeholders involved in the project. Here we were able to incorporate into the communication strategy two concepts that over the years have borne fruit vis-à-vis the virtuousness of the communication and education relationship, since the multimedia product encouraged the education-communication relationship, in addition to the multiple meanings of audiovisual language.
4. This communication initiative sought to generate an innovative proposal that would incorporate communication into the research of the group of specialists: it used audiovisual narratives and it socialized the experiment in local participatory forums. The articulation of these three communication forums allowed us to generate a media document that, posted on a portal, is readily accessible to any citizen who, because of his experience, interests and expectations, wants to bring about processes of transformation in daily life in relation to early childhood and transitions.

3.1.2. General objective

To show the project's results so as to promote thinking and a public commitment to the comprehensive protection of children to the age of eight in rural, indigenous and border communities who are in processes of transition.

3.1.3. Specific Objectives

1. To understand the transitions experienced by children through the age of eight in an indigenous community.
2. To inspire thinking and public commitment to the transition processes of children through the age of eight.
3. To put the topic on the national public agenda.
4. To position the topic nationally by identifying sources and winning the commitment of journalists.

3.1.4. Methodology

We planned three phases of action for the communications component:

1. **Preparation of a multimedia product:** based on the activities needed to conduct the field study: audiovisual and testimonial record for translating technical information into media products: video, photo gallery and podcast.
2. **Socialization and brainstorming forums:** for our forums where the information is socialized by experts, a reflective dynamic is generated, and participants' commitments are consolidated. Participants in these forums are state employees, teachers, parents, citizens interested in the issue, journalists, and media owners.
3. **Placing the topic on the public agenda:** press bulletins, launching the report through websites that carry the multimedia product, the advocacy strategy with media owners and journalists so that, while the forums are taking place, the media agenda will be permeated by the transitions issue.

3.1.5. Description of Activities

*The multimedia product*⁸⁰

As its name suggests, this combines a series of media sub products, such as videos, audio, photos and podcast. Other elements are also included there: the forums and press bulletins.

This was organized around the following elements:

1. **The theoretical framework:** presents the most important conceptual elements of the project on *"Trends in Transition Policies in Indigenous, Rural and Border Communities."*
2. **The project:** describes the background, why Colombia was included in this international project, what the general objectives of the project were, it introduces the findings of the Colombia case study: the Embera Chamí rural-indigenous community located in the municipality of Riosucio, department of Caldas, and includes documentation on progress in the previous stages, both in Colombia and in the other countries participating in the study.

⁸⁰ The multimedia product will be published shortly at the OAS-OEC webpage.

- 3. Policy analysis:** contextualizes early childhood policies and regulations in Colombia.
- 4. Specific conclusions:** presents the most important conclusions from the case study on the Embera Chamí indigenous community.
- 5. Forums and media:** presents the forums conducted in Bogotá and Manizales and includes journalists' notes published by the national and regional media. Representatives from the different sectors in which the topic was considered important were invited both to introduce the topic to the agendas of different officials and sectors that take decisions affecting transitions and to position it nationally, and win the commitment of journalists as multiplying elements.
- 6. General conclusions:** Presents the conclusions from the studies of policies and statistics on early childhood care and education.

Other actions in support of the communication component

1. Preparation of a database on journalists and foundations primarily interested in children and youth. This database covered eight cities: Cali, Medellín; Cartagena; Bogotá, Manizales; and Villavicencio, Boyacá, Armenia.
2. Twenty press bulletins prepared and sent to each city for publication or broadcasting in the local and national media.
3. Eight hours of recordings from the case study.
4. 150 photographs from the case study
5. Multimedia elements:
 - *Audio slide.*
 - *Video.*
 - *Photographic gallery.*
 - *Two cartoons.*
 - *An audio slide with photographs and video for the context.*
 - *Design of the logo.*
 - *Design of the multimedia product.*
 - *Multimedia assembly and articulation.*
 - *Graphic design.*
 - *Coverage of two forums.*
 - *Six podcasts.*
 - *Illustrations.*
 - *Infographs.*
 - *All the graphic conception, designs and multimedia development.*
6. Running the forums, which presupposed:
 - *Construction of a database.*
 - *Issuance of 2,000 invitations.*
 - *Preparation of agendas and search for logistical support.*
 - *Search for strategic partners.*
 - *Journalists' notes on the forums.*
 - *Video of the Bogotá forum including interviews with specialists and authorities, and opinion polls among participants.*
 - *Coordination of live transmission of the forum by City TV channel.*
 - *Preparation of notes published in the different media and arrangements for*

publication.

- *Preparation of two editorials for the weekly press.*
- *Live interview with Gaby Fujimoto, Project Coordinator and Senior Specialist of the OAS Office of Education and Culture.*

3.2. Peru⁸¹

Introduction

The communication efforts of *Acción por los Niños* in publicizing the project on "Trends in Transition Policies in Rural, Indigenous and Border Communities" served to introduce the issue and generate public interest.

The activities revealed a latent reality that affects our children and adolescents and made it possible to establish commitments to publicize the problem and influence regional and national authorities to put the issue on the public agenda.

In this respect, the final phase of communication activities in the project served:

- To establish permanent contact with institutions involved in early childhood issues in order to obtain information on their activities.
- Generate interest and commitment among journalists of the principal mass media for publicizing the project's topics.

Following is a detailed account of activities from 16 January to 31 March 2009 in pursuit of the project's objectives.

3.2.1. Progress with Activities and Initial Results

Activity 1. Preparation of a database on institutions working on early childhood issues to include the issue of transition policies

The database was designed not only to identify government and civil society institutions involved in early childhood care and education but also to identify the local, regional, national and institutional media.

That media identification made it possible to establish contact with journalists from radio stations, newspapers, press agencies etc. and invite them to participate in a workshop for journalists.

During this time, a total of 20 institutions were added to the database, two of them in the public sector. One of these is the *Adjuntía para la Niñez y la Adolescencia* (Juveniles Unit) within the Public Defender's Office, a body responsible for the defense and promotion of children's rights. Its objective is to help ensure that government agencies fulfill their functions in defending and promoting children's rights, to provide specialized expertise, and to help improve legislation and regulations as well as assist in the design and improvement of public policies for children and adolescents.

⁸¹ Team: Regina Moromizato (Coordinator); team of communicators (Acción por los Niños NGO): María Teresa Mosquera La Rosa, Consuelo Ramos Alva; support team: Liliana Cárdenas, Susana Reátegui.

The other government body is the *Movilización por la Infancia de la Mesa de Concertación para la Lucha contra la Pobreza* (MCLCP), a specialized unit of the national antipoverty council, which gives priority to promoting childcare services from the preventive perspective.

As part of this drive, national and regional roundtables initially focused their efforts in three areas: medical checkups for pregnant mothers, monitoring the growth and development of children during the first year of life, and ensuring that all births are registered.

Civil society institutions include the Fundación ANAR, the Alianza Save the Children, the Grupo de Iniciativas por la Infancia (GIN), and IFEJANT (an association for working adolescents), among others.

Finally, we have the *Alianza por el derecho Ciudadano* (ADC), a civil rights alliance, comprising 22 organizations supported by the state, civil society and international cooperation. It focuses on "the right to a name and an identity," working with its member organizations in remote and extremely poor parts of the high Andes and indigenous areas to assess the situation and encourage the local authorities, families and the education system to take action for young children and, especially, to take transitions into account.

Activity 2. Preparation of an updated agenda of events relating to transitions

In the final phase, a total of ten activities were identified that had early childhood as their central focus. Information on those activities was provided by the institutions themselves for dissemination via the Web and the bulletin.

In addition, reminders were sent out to people included in the database so that they could participate in these activities, all of which were open to the general public.

Activity 3. Preparation and dissemination of daily news bulletins on institutions' activities relating to transition policies

The early childhood agenda and institutional activities were included in the *Notinfancia* news bulletin, 73 issues of which were sent out between January and March.

The bulletins included a brief note on activities supplied by the institutions and four news stories about early childhood issues. As a result, 73 activities notes and 292 early childhood stories, totaling 365 reports, were distributed.

The scheduling of the bulletins was as follows: 19 (26% of the total) were distributed in January; 24 (33%) in February; and 30 (41%) in March. During the period from mid-January through March a total of 365 news stories were sent out: 95 in January, 120 in February, and 150 in March.

Thanks to this news bulletin, the number of subscribers to the NOTINFANCIA webpage (www.notinfancia.org.pe) of *Acción por los Niños* rose from 300 to 320.

Activity 4. Compilation of news stories on transition policies carried in four daily newspapers (Annex 4)

Our monitoring of the major national-circulation dailies of metropolitan Lima, such as *El Comercio*, *Perú 21*, *Correo*, *Ojo*, *La República*, *La Primera* and *El Peruano*, as well as television and radio news programs counted 292 notes and reports dealing with early childhood.

In all, 21 news media were monitored. They included three electronic media (*Foro Educativo*, *Noticias Aliadas* and *Radio Enlace*) broadcasting in the regions of Ayacucho, Huanuco, Junín, Cusco, and Ancash; these had not been included in the earlier period because they had not yet been identified.

We counted a total of 292 stories: 60 were notes posted on news portals, 103 were newspaper and news agency stories; and 129 were posted on radio broadcasters' web pages. The summary includes 30 notes and reports, showing the title of the story, the name of the newspaper or broadcaster, and the date of publication.

Activity 5. (01) Briefing session with journalists and communicators from the national government and municipalities to provide information and raise awareness about the issue for the development of reports

The design for this workshop was worked out in advance between the OAS Project Coordinator and *Acción por los Niños*, specifying the topics of interest to journalists and the objectives of the workshop.

The title of the event, selected to catch the interest of the target audience, was: *Medios de Comunicación: Un Compromiso con las Niñas, Niños y Adolescentes de las Comunidades Indígenas* ("The Communications Media: a Commitment to the Children and Youth of Indigenous Communities").

The objectives of the workshop were:

- To report on the educational, social and cultural needs of children and youth in indigenous communities.
- To publicize the government role in addressing the needs of children and adolescents in indigenous and rural communities.
- To encourage media coverage and suitable handling of questions relating to children and youth of the country's indigenous communities.

The topics addressed were the following:

- Educational problems in indigenous communities.
- Integral development of children and youth in those communities.
- The role of government organizations and civil society in the education of indigenous and rural children and youth.
- Government efforts to meet the education needs of indigenous children and youth.

A total of 25 journalists were identified as potential participants, on the basis of their capacity to place and keep the issue on the media agenda.

Formal invitations were then sent out to that list of journalists, with the support of the Pontifical Catholic University of Peru and *Acción por los Niños*, seeking assurance that the journalists would be able to attend for the full two hours of the workshop without interruption from their media. In the end, 12 journalists from a total of ten media accepted the invitation.

From the printed press, the newspapers *El Comercio*, *La República* and *Expreso* fielded six journalists; another two represented the magazines *Signos* of the Instituto Bartolomé de las Casas and *Bausate*, published by the Universidad Jaime Bausate y Meza.

There were two broadcasters, one from *Radio Nacional*, a government-owned radio station with nationwide transmission and a news orientation, and the other from *Radio Milenia*, a nationwide broadcaster interested in early childhood issues.

There was one institutional communicator, a journalist from the "School of the Air" program of the Ministry of Education, which publicizes activities under the national policy for intercultural, bilingual and rural education. The editor of the Agencia Noticias Aliadas news agency, which focuses on disseminating news in the interior of the country, also attended.

Lastly, the event attracted the news producer and a press assistant from Canal N, an all-news cable TV channel that is closely followed by government authorities and representatives. The workshop generated interest among participating journalists in issues relating to early childhood, and especially to children in indigenous communities.

3.3. Chile

The Current Situation in Chile:

- Early childhood is a priority of the Chilean government.
- President Michelle Bachelet increased this priority when she proclaimed her commitment to interculturalism.
- Intercultural kindergartens and nurseries are being built. **Dissemination—communications media—regional emphasis.**

First Steps:

a) Interculturalism as a Central Theme:

- **Strategy:** To insert the topic of interculturalism on the political agenda and in public opinion, as a prior and necessary step to pave the way for a second stage where it will be possible to address the issue of transitions in rural, border and indigenous communities.
- **Publication projects.** Pedagogical work on interculturalism has been reinforced with publication of the book "*Towards Interculturalism in Kindergartens*," as well as self-training modules for teachers, one of which is designed to include the intercultural perspective in teaching.
- Following the line of publications, and considering from a communicational perspective that this is an effective manner of informing and educating the public about such issues as integration, diversity, respect for ethnic groups and immigrant minorities, a special effort was made for the mass dissemination through the media of the first books published from the collection focused on the life experiences of indigenous and immigrant children in the JUNJI kindergartens—a publication that has attracted great interest from the Chilean press:
- Juan Jesús: from Peru to Chile (from Huaral to Recoleta).
- Javiera, a pewenche/kiñe girl. Indigenous and immigrant children of Chile.

The press:

- The launch of two books was widely publicized in two national and international mass media:
 - CNN
 - LATERCERA.COM

b) Transitions

- While in communication terms the strategy has focused on inserting the issue of interculturalism on the political agenda and in public opinion, the technical unit of JUNJI has published, as part of the self-training materials, a module on transitions: **“Transitions in Early Childhood Education.”**
- With respect to the specific case of disseminating and communicating the topic of trends in transitions in rural, indigenous and border communities, we have set a goal of presenting the results of the study in the framework of the *Simposio*, recognizing that, on one hand, there is a need for conclusive information and outcomes. On the other, that studies and statistical data are highly prized by the Chilean communications media. For this reason the information will be transformed into communication messages for the press.

ANNEX

**WORKSHOP WITH INDIGNEOUS LEADERS ABOUT HOME – SCHOOL
TRANSITIONS IN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES**

*Santiago de Chile, Chile
May 25, 2009*

Background Information

With UNICEF's support, the Government of Chile and the Office of Education and Culture of the Organization of American States (OAS) managed to organize the Second Inter American Symposium on “*Policies and Strategies for a Successful Transition of the Child towards the Socialization and The School*”, held in Valparaiso, Chile, from 27 to 29 May 2009. In response to the “Hemispheric Commitment to Early Childhood Education” signed by Ministers of Education in November 2007, the Symposium formed part of an intergovernmental initiative to contribute to strengthen the institutional capacity of national education departments on the development of policies and strategies aimed at the preparation of children for life and their success at school. The Symposium counted on the participation of 28 National Pre-school Education Directors, 11 Elementary Education Directors and approximately 300 participants from the region, who dedicated a great deal of the conference to analyze quality, equity and efficiency of the education system during the transition of children from preschool or initial education to the first grades of basic or primary education.

In the wake of this meeting and repeating the scheme used during the Regional Conference of UNICEF and OAS about Civil Registry of Births, the UNICEF Regional Office for Latin America and the Caribbean organized a meeting with 17 Indigenous Leaders and/or Activists of different peoples of the region, including Maroons of Suriname and Garifuna of Belize involved in education programs, specially about early childhood. In the occasion, participants debated about the processes experienced by Indigenous children during their transition from family and community to early education programs and from those to primary education and subsequently to secondary education.

UNICEF considered important to dedicate a moment of reflection to explore the variety of concepts about transition that operate in the region, and review Indigenous peoples' requests and concerns about the experiences lived by Indigenous children when they are incorporated to the school system, which often rules out Indigenous Peoples and contributes to a process of cultural uprooting and loss of cultural identity.

Objectives

The conference aimed at stirring up a debate and reflection about the offer and quality of early and pre-scholar education for Indigenous children, according to the characteristics of the transition processes.

And among **main specific goals** of the meeting, the following stood out:

- Start thinking about the transition process and to share relevant experiences;
- Identify most relevant issues in response to the political situation, programs and challenges faced by Indigenous Peoples,
- Develop a political and program proposal with key messages to education authorities of the respective countries and to the core of communities.

Introduction

On behalf of the office of UNICEF Chile, Esperanza Vives (Deputy Representative) opened the session with a welcome to all guest, highlighting the importance of the meeting as an opportunity to exchange experiences with the Indigenous world from sister countries in Latin America and the Caribbean. In turn, Esperanza mentioned the efforts endeavored by UNICEF in Chile to guarantee cultural appropriateness of programs and public policies for early childhood in the country, through the creation of spheres for dialogue and reflection with actors involved. By way of example, she mentioned meetings with the Mapuche civil society, support to activities with secondary school students, workshops with the press, development of studies about upbringing guidelines, etc.

Based on these experiences, she pointed out that the office in Chile, especially with Mapuches and lately with Rapa Nui People, has ascertained the relevance and importance of listening to and sharing with those who are hardly ever taken on. This has also enabled to transform the concept of interculturality into reality; that is, to cherish the world, beliefs, values, culture and cosmovision of other peoples, in a relation of mutual respect, aperture to dialogue and to differences.

To bring the workshop into the sphere of a Symposium about transitions in education, she highlighted the importance of placing state programs into cultural and social context, a fundamental support to facilitate the access of children and adolescents to school and to further stages of their development.

Ms. Esperanza asserted that this has been and shall remain an extremely valuable resource for UNICEF to maintain this kind of relationship with the Indigenous world. It is not always easy to create spaces of dialogue and exchange such as this workshop, for which she recognized the importance of organizing meetings and events involving Indigenous and non-Indigenous worlds in a truly intercultural and horizontal perspective that applies the recognition and appraisal of one another, and together achieve the construction of a better world to our children, taking on the challenge of putting interculturality in practice to contribute to enhance democracy.

Indigenous Cosmovision and Upbringing Standards

Children education based on indigenous cosmovision and its relation with community, family and the education center. The Ecuadorian Amazon Experience – Jaime Gayas, Ecuador

Jaime Gayas, Regional Director for Bilingual Intercultural Education in the Ecuadorian Amazon and a member of Kickwa People, started his presentation emphasizing to the fact that Ecuador is a plurinational State where different peoples have their nationality acknowledged and consequently the State is challenged to meet the expectations of children of different nationalities.

Mr. Gayas continued and described the education system and its characteristics in the Ecuadorian Amazon Region. The Regional Department, know as DREIBAE, has an IBE model⁸² in force since 1993. It is characterized principally by a life approach and therefore, according to Mr. Gayas, the non-fragmentation of the different stages of education into preschool, primary, secondary and superior; rather, it follows an educational guideline divided into learning units that start in the heart of the family. This proposal is based on a straight line formed by integrated learning units, by means of which children make their headway according to their speed. In basic education, there are 74 units and the teacher is a mere guide that must respond to the learning pace of the child.

⁸² Intercultural Bilingual Education

As per the treatment given to languages: a National language, a foreign language and Spanish are approached. Therefore, the teacher must master at least one National language. The education is performed in the mother tongue so that children are able to develop linguistic skills in several languages.

Another feature of this education model is the use of culture traditional learning environments; not the classroom per se, but rich spaces such as rivers, ranches, beaches, paths, etc. Also, the school calendar is defined by the community and it is characterized by a flexible schedule, with a month dedicated to family living.

Jaime Gaya highlighted that this is a *family and community-oriented child education* with an active participation of community leaders (elderly, students, wise men, etc.). The family is responsible for the education; therefore, there is a strong component in preparing it from early with the expecting mother, since this education system wants to prevent the children to be separated from their family environment. To that end, it proposes to reinforce knowledge, values and spirituality of their own nationalities, by means of recognizing at first the family role, an active participation of elderly and the importance of the language. Likewise, this education tries to guarantee a curriculum that pairs these children's reality, by using pedagogical elements that are different from those of the current education system, which are considered oppressive.

The experience presented by Mr. Gayas aims at transforming the school into an environment that enables a comprehensive development based on a holistic approach. This educative system is little by little eliminating formalisms such as uniform, bell ringing, national flag hoisting, etc. The teacher is chosen by the community; however, the community government council has a decisive role and makes use of pedagogic criteria to supervise, assess and keep an eye on the development of education community centers.

The role of early childhood anthropology – Alí Fernández, Venezuela

Anthropologist Alí Fernández of Venezuela, who is a member of the Wayuu People, initially gave emphasis to the fact that there are 35 Indigenous Peoples in Venezuela. Having said that, he invited all to reflect upon their own transition processes that have taken Indigenous Peoples to fight and put up a lot of resistance. He pointed out that norms of upbringing are the foundations for the perpetuation of the peoples; in turn, if the norms of upbringing change, lifestyles will change.

Mr. Fernández affirmed that the Indigenous thinking is the opposing party of the education system in the country, since the system itself is likely to level the learning process and reproduce a copy of a far away and alien world to the Indigenous people. However, he pointed out that each people has a particular way of teaching their children and adolescents their culture, and moreover, to make use of their own methodologies for the transmission of inherited knowledge. In order to redeem those methodologies, social and cultural anthropology plays a very important role in documenting and studying the Indigenous cosmovision and upbringing standards.

Mr. Fernández pointed out that the teaching approach should gather the people's own culture, that the pedagogic approach and the Indigenous didactic should be retrieved and that their basic components should be thought over again. For example, “to our people, observation is the first way of learning, it is the first step toward learning”, highlighted the Anthropologist, and orality, its main instrument. Likewise, responsibility has a great deal of importance for Indigenous Peoples, and experience is also fundamental in their cultural life, as through singing, storytelling, etc.

There has been no adequate transition in the education processes; it has been rather traumatic, in a scenario of cultural frontier. The education process adopted is alien to the students, turns its back to the

family, and is out of cultural context. And in Mr. Fernández' own words: "How can we build new intercultural approaches in education?" To that end, he proposed to document knowledge, reinforce own education models, work directly with Indigenous teachers and mothers, and instill changes in the training of professional teachers and care givers, in order to innovate and create new methodologies of their own and not receive prefabricated modules.

Mr. Fernández wrapped his presentation by making reference to community care centers dedicated to early childhood in Venezuela, the so called "multi-hogares" (or literally: multi-homes, in English). According to Alí Fernández, these child care centers are currently seen as children nursing/feeding centers while their mothers are at work, and not connected to a process favorable to the development of these children's own opportunities. According to the Anthropologist, these multi-homes should not be feeding-only-6-hour-stay-children-nursing-centers, with no pedagogical program.

Community centers must be influenced by means of the research on upbringing standards and by strengthening the importance of knowledge for children from zero to six years of age. He finally pointed out that it is important to acknowledge and focus on teachers who work within this social and educational reality, and to contribute to the improvement of relevant curricula.

Resignification of PEC from cosmovision and interculturality. The Colombian Amazon Experience – Jesús Plinio, Colombia

Jesús Plinio, a Kokuma of the Colombian Amazon, presented the experience of María Auxiliadora Community Education Project. This project started in early 90's, lost community support and recently restarted again. Mr. Plinio explained how the building process has been complex, principally due to the resistance on behalf of those same communities that do not see the benefit of an intercultural education based on the Indigenous cosmovision. In addition, he pointed out that most inhabitants do not speak the language. Therefore, he highlighted that one of the major tasks has been to sensitize families with the support from main allies such as Indigenous leaders, community-based organizations and associations.

The so called Resignification Project is based upon a set of educative activities and strategies that seek to educate and contribute towards the integrated development of indigenous children, who belong to a variety of different ethnic groups in the interpretation and an indigenous cosmovision deeply related to the environment and the Colombian reality. The project advocates for the rights of Indigenous peoples and reassesses the training stages of students from an Indigenous perspective.

The project is under construction for a more adequate education with its own curriculum that takes into consideration culture, territory, Indigenous crop areas or "Chagras", etc. To that end, family and community are recognized to be essential actors in this construction, as well as the academic expertise of professional experts such as anthropologists. Those brought forth as key elements during the presentation are the following:

- Legislation needs improving (to be able count on a legal framework that gives support to Indigenous education programs)
- Sensitization at medium levels that conduct politics
- Strengthening of capacities at local levels
- Cost Reduction to families and communities
- Teachers and Primary Care Takers should be Indigenous and speak their language

Ancestral Knowledge and Its Transmission with the Participation of Family, Community and the State

The "TXüR TXEMüAIÑ" ("Growing Together"), a pregnancy and birth guide – Pablo Manquenahuel, Chile

Pablo Manquenahuel, Mapuche and UNICEF Advisor, disclosed the process of adaptation of some material produced by the Government of Chile to the Mapuche culture. It is a guide about pregnancy and birth. The guide is distributed to pregnant women throughout the country. The study was conducted in the Araucania Region, a region where UNICEF has been working for almost ten years.

UNICEF adapted this material upon request from the Government. During the presentation, the advisor to UNICEF pointed out that the overall participation was key to the process of drawing up an intercultural guide on health. The recovery of knowledge was carried out by means of interviews with Mapuche leaders from different communities, health agents and last but not the least, traditional midwives who helped to sort out the material content. At a point in time, the use of Mapuzugun language was considered; however, there was no consensus on the writing of the language, and as this is a material to be distributed countrywide, the final decision was to write it in Spanish. On the other hand, there was a process of validation as per the content and illustrations by means of focal groups of discussion with Mapuche mothers of rural areas, who contributed with comments and remarks to the final work.

Health staff from the Araucania region is currently being trained on the use of the guide and a follow up on its use is planned. A similar adaptation process is being carried out also for Rapa Nui culture, in Easter Island.

Mr. Manquenahuel pointed out some lessons learned. Firstly, he mentioned that the development of such a material must be a responsibility shared among government, an independent organization such as UNICEF and Indigenous Peoples themselves; that this process shows the cultural belonging in protection policies, materials and their expression at local level, and that the strengthening of the cultural identity since gestation must be based on biomedical and cultural knowledge that complement one another.

Early childhood care centers in mixed modality – Corpus Malale, Bolivia

Corpus Malale, a member of Mojeño Indigenous People from the Bolivian Amazon, explained that in the Amazon, there are simply 18 Indigenous Peoples and that in Bolivia there are currently two political scenarios: the Constitutional Assembly and the Education National Congress which are changing the State model and their responsibilities towards the education of its citizens.

The experience presented by Corpus with regard to children's holistic development has received support from UNICEF since 2001, when it started as a literacy project aimed at parents that had not attended school, as a form of strengthening their identity and increase their awareness on the importance of fostering early childhood development since pregnancy.

Corpus pointed out that the following key elements for an early childhood development should be reviewed to guarantee cultural pertinence:

- To adjust the children's developmental scales to fit the social political and economic reality of the family;

- To improve the communication strategy with parents and communities so that the project is understood; support may be found in videos and radio programs that reach the target at stake. The role played by older siblings is also very important;
- To enter an inter sectorial agreement to achieve better results in the children integrated development, whereas child development indicators (nutrition, psychomotor development, speech development, etc.) and family indicators (type of family, home conditions, utilities available, etc.) should be considered.
- To identify pilot strategies of any community that produces good results and socialize it straightaway to assess the impact and effectiveness for advocating towards greater investments and expansion of ECD programs.
- To have the family as backbone and facilitator for a successful transition of the child to the school (considering crucial elements that aid transitions such as differences in bedtime habits, hygiene, etc.).

Corpus Malale suggested the need for developing an intracultural (language), intercultural and multilingual curriculum after thinking about the language and the linguistic approach. To that end, it is often important and necessary to strengthen language orality, and a good possible method would be to use audio recordings and follow up the cultural socialization with parents by the use of games and other pedagogic tools.

Mr. Malale wrapped his presentation with some food for thought about kindergartens/multi-homes, which are so common in Latin America, and the care provided by them to Indigenous children: what do they offer?; How do they pass knowledge and Indigenous visions?; Do they seek advice from the communities? And, finally, how to maintain traditions and knowledge in the urban context? How to promote interculturality in those children care centers?

Initial Intercultural and Bilingual Education. The Role of the Mother Tongue

Bilingual education in Guyana – Dr. Desrey Fox, Guyana

Ms. Desrey Fox, Doctor in linguistics and Minister of Education in Guyana, member of the Akawaio Indigenous People started her presentation with a brief description of her country, highlighting that fact that Guyana is the only English speaking country in South America. According to official data, the country has a population of approximately 70 thousand Indigenous people of nine different groups. In Guyana, 90% of the population lives on the coast, but most Indigenous people live in different ecosystems in the interior of the country and far away from the capital city. In some cases, Amerindians in this country live on agriculture of subsistence and to live in the interior, in the Doctor's own words, "has been a blessing to us, because we grow our food, we fish, we experience our own ecosystems." A total of 95% of Akawaio, people to whom Dr. Fox belongs to, speak their own language, as well as eight other indigenous peoples in the country. Only the Awak have their language endangered; however, there are programs and projects to rescue it.

Doctor Fox explained that, so far, the State of Guyana has had a monolingualism policy. The State has chosen to offer a sole education model in English, the official language of the country, reducing therefore the value of other cultures and languages. Therefore, Indigenous communities have learnt English as their second language, but with no defined methodology, and as a result, this has oppressed the original language and contributed to the loss of their own identity and ancestral knowledge. Today, the school syllabus remains the same to all; there are no bilingual education programs. Bilingualism is not a

priority; however, the State has started to consider the particularities of Indigenous Peoples and today, there are more opportunities for the development of an Indigenous education. This is also due to the demands of Indigenous leadership.

As of the 90's, the State started to provide pre-schooling education services. Preschools were generally introduced, but they are virtually unseen in Indigenous communities. Programs are facilitated in a standard format and with the vision that all Indigenous peoples are the same.

Dr. Fox pointed out that the current government has political will to improve the access of Indigenous children to education and also the training of Indigenous teachers through scholarships. These scholarships are designed to help Indigenous students from the interior to study in Georgetown, and there is a scholarship program for higher grades that opens the possibility of studying abroad, for example in Cuba.

She also pointed out the importance and role of community based organizations, which have joined efforts to support the development of materials and mainly dictionaries for bilingual education. Ms. Fox also referred to the existence of an IBE Unit at the University of Guyana and that resources are available, pending only on the training of community personnel. One of the main challenges is to find a consensus about language systems due to difficulties and the how badly these communities have been uprooted by the imposing character of the School and religious missions, which create a great deal of controversy.

Doctor Fox concluded her presentation pointing out that the State of Guyana is willing to establish an inclusive education that respects cultural differences in the country. However, to that end, Indigenous communities should also be proactive and form close bonds with the school. Likewise, a special effort should be made to standardize Indigenous writing systems and develop materials so that children increase their language skills.

Mother tongue in Garifuna Community preschools in Belize – Phyllis Cayetano, Belize

Phyllis Cayetano, a Garifuna female activist from Belize, started her presentation pointing out the similarities between Guyana, as presented by Dr. Fox, and Belize, which takes us back to the British colonialism common to both countries. Ms. Cayetano said that “as Guyana is the only English speaking country in South America, Belize is also the only English speaking country in Central America.” She moved on and introduced some historical background to Garifuna descendants and the reasons for them to settle on the Caribbean coast of Central America.

Ms. Cayetano explained how the British education system little by little wiped out the Garifuna culture and language, which is quite evident in the youngest children. For this reason, the Garifuna National Council, with support from UNICEF and the government has steered the first education experience with Garifuna children at Guilisi Community School since April del 2007. This school reinforces cultural values by promoting cultural and behavioral habits, use of uniform inspired on typical outfit and Garifuna percussion music. Today, the school counts with 56 children between four and six years of age.

Phyllis Cayetano recalled that though there has been considerable advancements made in the last few decades in terms of primary education with Indigenous and Garifuna populations, there is little debate regarding the education stage prior to the primary education. Thanks to support from UNICEF and the active participation of parents in the community, the Garifuna Council in Belize has developed a pre-school curriculum from the bottom up, to fill out that blank. In this experience, parents had to receive

training and support to re-learn Garifuna language, both oral and in the written form. She pointed out the importance of not throwing anchors on a curriculum based solely on an Indigenous vision; rather, one must acknowledge the importance of interculturality. To that end, it is necessary to build both language skills and practices in Garifuna, as well as general skills and knowledge about the modern world, based on western life styles. Ms. Cayetano recognized in her own words that “we must have a curriculum with the best of both worlds, with our culture but also English that helps us all to find jobs.”

She finalized her presentation reminding all that every country is different and experiences differ in their processes. Therefore, each country must decide how to exercise their rights regarding Indigenous education and inclusion in public politics. She also referred to the importance of community-based mobilizations, particularly from families and the media in strengthening and revitalizing Indigenous languages.

Contextualized Education Programs

Experience with APEDIMI early and preschool education program – Magdalena Pérez Raymundo, Guatemala

Magdalena Pérez Raymundo presented the experience of APPEDIBIMI Education Program in Ixil municipalities in Guatemala (a total of 18 communities). In Guatemala, 60% of the population is Indigenous in a coexistence of 25 languages.

This project bases the whole learning process onto the family. It takes into account the first life stages of development, starting with mothers at pregnancy and taking the family as a pillar for the education process. Magdalena Pérez pointed out that the education process focuses on family and educators with an integrating methodology that includes as main actors family members, community leaders and elderly citizens.

The project started with a curricular proposal for preschool as a way of contributing to improve life quality for children, by means of working with families and also at political spheres, focusing on their rights. Likewise, it is important to point out that Magdalena Perez presented this project as something new owing to its participative methodology focused on culture and linguistics with several cores (cosmovision, rights, interculturality, health, etc.), in the social, economic and cultural fields in order to influence public policies.

From the very beginning, the work was based on the search for pedagogic innovation within a cultural context based on children’s rights and gender equality, the comprehensive development of children and generation of knowledge, in order to integrate it into regional and national policies. Some of the other highlights of the project mentioned by Magdalena are the care provided to children from zero to four years of age, the care provided to children from five to six years of age, reading rooms, parental participation, use of methodology and content of their own culture, community participation, parent schooling, involvement of community leaders, and participation of mothers as facilitators.

Other areas recognized by Ms. Pérez as extremely important to APPEDIBIMI project were:

- Continuous education and training of teachers, parents and facilitators of early education;
- Monitoring and Assessment;
- Life Education integrated into social aspects of their own world and others;
- Participative methodology: by PLAYING (learning and building rights and responsibilities);

- Involvement and Participation of community leaders, families and authorities.

Some of the achievements highlighted were:

- The development of an education of quality, with cultural and linguistic belonging and no school dropout;
- 30 centers operating with a participative methodology and cultural and linguistic belonging, and a curriculum of their own;
- 40 teachers accredited.

Among challenges, APPEDIBIMI has the following to face: guarantee children's program adherence, multiply the experience, influence public policies, and improve training programs.

First steps towards an intercultural early education – Alba Duarte, Paraguay

Alba Duarte, an Ava Guarani of Paraguay, explained that the government of Paraguay has been giving more emphasis to early education since 2002. On the other hand, Alba Duarte pointed out that so far, elderly leaders have created obstacles to the enrollment of little children at government preschools, principally due to mistrust and disbelief that little can be taught by a non-Indigenous teacher to children that come from home with their own universe of knowledge.

After a long battle, the government of Paraguay opened in 2008 the General Department of Indigenous Education. Now, Indigenous people in the country are legally protected and education plans are being developed. In Paraguay, 1.7% of the population is Indigenous; there are five linguistic families, and 20 peoples with language, chants and dances of their own.

Alba Duarte pointed out that children speak Paraguayan Guarani at school and their own language at home and in cultural centers. Although most of them speak Paraguayan Guarani, they are proud of their own language and still cherish a desire for an education in their own mother tongue, learn the official language, redeem their cultural knowledge, participate in education plans, have their Indigenous and non-Indigenous teachers capacitated. Ms. Duarte pointed out that in Paraguay, people are taking their first steps onto the following lines of action to the future:

- Expand the network of educators,
- Disseminate law,
- Research themes within the sphere of education
- And to have a pertinent curricular framework that strengthens ownership and identification needs.

Early education and the role of the Ministry of Carib Affairs – Dr. Charles Corbette, Dominica

Dr. Charles Corbette, of the Ministry of Carib Affairs of Dominica, started the presentation pointing out that the history of the country and the Indigenous communities are similar to the history of Guyana and Belize. Dominica gained its independence from Great Britain in 1978 and enacted the Carib Act that grants autonomy to the Carib Reservation. Dr. Corbette also mentioned that historically, they have been called Carib, but now there is a movement to change their name to Karinago. Roughly 4,500 people live in the reservation, despite the fact that approximately 80% of Dominicans have some Karinago blood.

Karinago language has completely disappeared. Today, English is the official language, and French based Creole and Spanish are also spoken. Doctor Corbette explained that soon after the arrival to Dominica of Columbus, African slaves were brought to Dominica, gradually mixing with Karinago people. The Secretary of Indigenous Affairs was created in 2000 and in 2001; the government signed the Convention #169 of the ILO, followed by the creation of the Ministry of Indigenous Affairs.

With regard to the development of early childhood, the Government only offers education services to children older than five. Preschooling is offered by NGO's and the Church only. In the case of Karinago Reservation, the private sector is making services available for a comprehensive development of first childhood. So far, there are five centers dedicated to children aged three to five. Most children are brought up by their grandparents due to high unemployment rates; the first childhood development is a private business, and only a few can afford tuition for preschool education centers. In response to this situation, there is a program in place in which Karinago youngsters attend homes to work and care for the young children while their parents are at work.

In 2004, the Ministry of Indigenous Affairs and teachers from the Karinago territory formed a Committee dedicated to early childhood and primary education in order to increase the knowledge on Indigenous traditions. Dr. Corbette finalized the presentation on the Dominican experience mentioning that some progress has been achieved in spite of the great challenges faced by the Karinago population. However, one must admit that there is a will and good intention to meet the needs of these populations and specifically, the needs of that age group in particular, although it remains a major challenge.

After all the presentations, there was a debate in which participants drew the following suggestions and concerns:

- There is a need to recognize and acknowledge traditional indigenous educators that work in classrooms and with communities.
- Any proposal to be submitted to government authorities should highlight the concerns regarding the discrimination experienced by Indigenous children. That is, any kind of discrimination against young children should be stopped, because that causes damage to their identity for their whole life. It is necessary to approach the issue with education public policies that are inclusive.
- Indigenous education should be shared with non-Indigenous schools; every education must have elements of Indigenous culture, which is translated into a true intercultural education with dialogue and exchange between cultures.
- The Cultural diversity of the countries must be recognized.
- States must make Intercultural Bilingual Education (IBE) a public policy; the state must take responsibility on the education with a legal framework for the Indigenous education.
- Public policies must be developed with the participation of Indigenous peoples, to provide quality education for all.
- Early education must be a priority to be included in the agenda of Indigenous organizations.
- Articulation of international organizations, Government and Indigenous peoples must done horizontally for an exchange of experiences among different countries and the disclosure of points of view from Indigenous peoples
- Training of all teachers in Indigenous interculturality
- Promote the development of education materials by peoples and nationalities themselves in several languages, to be shared.

Conclusions

To conclude, it could be said that the meeting was extremely successful owing to the following reasons:

- For the first time, a regional meeting to specifically deal with early childhood development in Indigenous populations is held after almost 15 years.
- The meeting gave room to an exchange of experiences among Caribbean and Continental Indigenous peoples, which is not very common.
- Several ongoing experiences were presented, many of which supported by UNICEF.
- Participants managed to draft a brief document that focuses on the essential aspects to be taken into account in the development of early childhood programs for Indigenous communities. This document is attached to this document and will be presented to the Ministers of Education during the Meeting of Ministers of OAS to be held in mid-August of the current year.
- It confirmed that early childhood development and to ensure an intercultural and intracultural perspective is crucial; therefore, efforts must be made towards that direction.
- Participants highlighted the importance of pedagogy, epistemology and Indigenous vision when designing early childhood education and development strategies, instead of merely reducing it to the linguistic aspects of teaching. Likewise, there are several interesting experiences and lessons learned that TACRO should document and assess.

During the week, participants prepared a "declaration" that was subsequently presented in plenary session to the more than 250 guests at the Symposium, with 12 recommendations addressed to OAS Member States to guarantee the Indigenous children transition from their home to the primary school, and the joint development of their potential (see attached Declaration).

List of Participants

Country	Name	Last Name	Indigenous Peoples	Position	Organization	Telephone	E-mail
Belize	Phyllis	Cayetano	Garífuna		National Garifuna Council	501) 522 5195 / 610 4924	pcayetano@gmail.com
Bolivia	Corpus	Malale	Mojeño	Coordinador	Consejo Educativo del Pueblo Originario Indígena Mojeño CEPOIM	(591) 3 - 4822405 o (591) 3 – 4828201, (591) 76887943	cmalale@hotmail.com

Chile	Juana	Cheuquepan Colipe	Mapuche	Presidenta Coordinadora Programa de Educación Inter-cultural Bilingüe (PEIB) Comuna de La Pintana	Organización Mapuche Kiñe Pu Liwen	8-7270770	jcheuquepan@gmail.com
	Verónica	Huaquilaf Rodríguez	Mapuche	Vice-presidenta	Comunidad José Miguel Huaquian, de la Región de la Araucanía (sur de Chile)	Tel celular 09-9080212 07-9073192	lig_rayen@hotmail.com
	Elisa	Loncon	Red por los Derechos Educativos y Lingüísticos			Tel (02) 71600009 Cel 081562851	elisaloncon@yahoo.es
	Catalina	Moya		Consultora	UNICEF Chile		cmoya@unicef.org
	Oriana	Zanzi		Consultora	UNICEF Chile		ozanzi@unicef.org
	Pablo	Manquenahuel		Consultor	UNICEF Chile		pmanquenahuel@unicef.org
Costa Rica	Israel	Aguilar Aguilar	Cabécar	Asistente técnico de atención primaria	Caja Costarricense de Seguro Social	tel: (506) 2531 6049, Celular: (506) 8379 8306	almaindigena@gmail.com
	Carlos	Van der Laat		Consultor UNICEF	Centro de Investigación para el Desarrollo Rural	(506) 22805042	carlosvanderlaat@gmail.com
Colombia	Jesús	Plinio Garzon	Kokama	Profesor	Escuela Madre Laura	Tel Celular (57) 31244206 31	jepli@hotmail.com
Dominica	Charles	Corbette	Carib	Director	Ministry of Carib Affairs	Tel : 767 449 8132 Fax : 767-448-6753	caribaffairs@cwdom.dm corbettec@hotmail.com

Ecuador	Jaime	Gayas	Kickwa	Director Regional	Dirección Regional de Educación Intercultural Bilingüe de la Amazonía Ecuatoriana	(593) 032 884 263 098176160 090962933	jmesias_m20@yahoo.es
Guatemala	Magdalena	Perez Raymundo		Coordinadora Pedagógica	APPEDIBIMI	Tel (502) 77560101 / 59721075	appedibimi@yahoo.com
Guyana	Desrey	Fox	Akawaio	Doctora	Junior Minister of Education		Mawasha2001@yahoo.co.uk
Jamaica	Sian	Gale Williams		ECD Sub-regional Advisor for the Caribbean	UNICEF Jamaica		sgwilliams@unicef.org
Mexico	Rosalina	García García	Indígena hablante de la lengua mazateca y de español	Presidenta	Sistema para el Desarrollo Integral de la Familia (DIF)		rositenango@gmail.com
	Ana Karla	Enriquez Reyes		Consultora	UNICEF MEXICO		Anakarla.enriquez@gmail.com
Panama	Elvira	Guillen	Kuna		CONAMUIP Coordinación Nacional de Mujeres Indígenas de Panamá	(507) 68 82 16 87 (507) 2595276	absoked@hotmail.com
	Anna Lucia	D'Emilio		Asesora Regional Educación	UNICEF TACRO	507 301 7486	aldemilio@unicef.org
	Maite	Onochie		Especialista en Desarrollo Infantil	UNICEF TACRO	507 301 7410	monochie@unicef.org
Paraguay	Alba	Duarte	Ava Guaraní	Docente e integrante del equipo técnico del Ministerio de Educación y Cultura	Dirección General de Educación Indígena	(595) 971 803 789 Dir. Gen. de Educación Indígena (595) 21452896	tobygon@gmail.com

Peru	Claudia	Palomino	Quechua	Promotora de salud voluntaria y líder de comunidad rural Chanka de la región Apurímac	Programa Buen Inicio		
Suriname	Lesley	Artist	AmerIndian Descent	Traditional village head and Policy advisor of the Ministry of Regional development	Federation of Indigenous chief leaders	(597) 8654 309	infovids@vids.sr
	Cynthia	Alendy	Maroon Descent	Doctora		(597) 8536 831	cyntalendy@yahoo.com
Venezuela	Alí	Fernández	Wuayuu	Antropólogo y profesor universitario	Universidad de Zulia	58-426-6222167	aliwuayuu@hotmail.com

The Declaration of the Indigenous Peoples

The multitude of Indigenous peoples present at the II Latin American Symposium about the Transition of Children towards the Socialization and the School OAS 2009, supported by international legal framework, Indigenous Rights legislators, and the commitment within the hemisphere for the first childhood education (Cartagena de Indias, 2007), manifest that:

Within the framework of this Symposium, there is acknowledgment of the holistic and comprehensive vision of attention, care and education to the first childhood, which for millennia have formed the backbone of our forms of lives, expressed in our own socialization strategies socialization of children who seek the continuity and projection of our own peoples.

Whereas the above, in the search for equity conditions in education based on cultural differences and perspective of rights, we take on the responsibility of sharing our knowledge by means of dialogue of wisdom and good practices in order to contribute to the comprehensive children development in our America. In turn, however, we demand the governments to adequate their public policies to linguistic and cultural particularities of Indigenous peoples in the region and to generate effective spheres of participation based on the right to free, previous and informed permission to all first Indigenous childhood education programs, that puts an end to children development programs based on dominant language and culture, which have caused the loss of identity and low self esteem.

Within this context, we propose the following **Recommendations**:

- Any children development program must be based on beliefs, social cultural and spiritual practices (cosmovision) that are the foundation to the upbringing of each Indigenous people and their mother tongue.
- The education process is continuous, and that is why it is important to foster the education for a lifetime, and avoid the fragmentation of education levels and the fragmentation of wisdom. Therefore, the transition must be seen with continuity and growth. It is necessary to ascertain continuity during the transition from an initial education level to the subsequent ones with regard to the use of the Indigenous language and in turn allow the appropriation of other tongues.
- In general, three essential elements in the transition must be considered: child, family and school. In the case of Indigenous peoples, a collective element must be added: the community and the extended family, since grandparents and the elderly occupy a very important role.
- It is also necessary to consider the situation of the Indigenous children living in urban areas, because these also need an education that strengthens their identity and sense of belonging to an Indigenous people and to their country as a whole.
- Education happens not only at school. School spaces should not be necessarily institutionalized: one learns by watching, by doing, and in contact with the environment.
- Educators, facilitators, and health agents should belong to the Indigenous group, know the Indigenous culture, and speak their mother tongue. When Indigenous educators are not available, Indigenous and non-Indigenous human resource training programs with intercultural perspective should be promoted. It is also important to acknowledge and certify community educators and Indigenous wise men and women.

- Definite actions should be urgently taken against the discrimination of Indigenous children, especially in urban areas where they are subject to discrimination based on their names or outfit. Education systems and other state institutions should prohibit and punish any form of manifestation of racism. In turn, it is necessary to sensitize the society as a whole about the values of ethno cultural diversity and about Indigenous knowledge and wisdom.
- The States should invest in Indigenous education and allocate enough resources to meet the needs related to: the training of human talents, infrastructure and equipment, education materials, transportation and mobilization.
- Linguistic, social and anthropological research should be facilitated with the participation of Indigenous specialist and with the involvement of the community.
- In order to translate the legal framework into practice, it is important to sensitize the medium level education authorities.
- It is necessary to strengthen the work with Indigenous women and increase their participation in the decision making process of public policies.
- To guarantee to Indigenous communities the provision of a health and education care of quality that recognizes their own knowledge and practices.

At last, our many thanks to UNICEF and to the Organization of American States OAS for the opportunity to participate in this event and our thanks to the host country for welcoming us.

Chile, Valparaiso, May 29 2009.-

Country	Name	Last Name	Indigenous Peoples
Belize	Phyllis	Cayetano	Garífuna
Bolivia	Corpus	Malale	Mojeño
Chile	Juana	Chequepan Colipe	Mapuche
	Verónica	Huaiquilaf Rodríguez	Mapuche
Costa Rica	Israel	Aguilar Aguilar	Cabécar
Colombia	Jesús Plinio	Garzon Cahuache	Kokama
Dominica	Charles	Corbette	Carib
Ecuador	Jaime	Gayas	Kickwa
Guatemala	Magdalena	Pérez Raymundo	Maya Ixil
Guyana	Desrey	Fox	Akawaio
Mexico	Rosalina	García García	Mazateca
Panama	Elvira	Guillen	Kuna
Paraguay	Alba	Duarte	Ava Guaraní

Peru	Claudia	Palomino	Quechua
Suriname	Lesley	Artist	AmerIndian
	Cynthia	Alendy	Maroon (Aucanisi)
Venezuela	Alí	Fernández	Wuayuu