

BREAKING BARRIERS TO EDUCATION

PARAGUAY CASE STUDY

THE 20 COMMITMENTS TO CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS



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This case study was prepared by Children Believe Paraguay country director Jorge Méndez Rheineck, communications manager, Rosanna Menchaca, and consultant Guillermo Monroy. It is the second in the *Breaking barriers to education series* of reports sharing knowledge and lessons learned from Children Believe programs designed to provide children with the tools and training they need to access education, overcome barriers and be a voice of change.

Special thanks also goes to our local non-governmental allies and networks including the Front for Children and Adolescents (Front), particularly the children and adolescents who participated in the process, the Children Believe (CB) Paraguay team, and the government of Paraguay which helped to realize the 20 Commitments described in this case study.

Children Believe, 2020

COVER: Members of the Front for Children and Adolescents, including youth from REDNNA, at the Government Palace where newly elected President of Paraguay, Mario Abdo Benítez ratified the 20 Commitments to Children and Adolescents on his first day in office, August 16, 2018, which was also national Children's Day.

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KEY

Adolescents: Youth from the age of 14 to 17.

Children: Youth from infancy to age 13.

20 Commitments: Refers to the commitments in favour of children and adolescents, signed by presidential candidates during the election campaign and ratified by the elected president on his first day in office. The 20 Commitments are promoted by the Front for Children and Adolescents.

Front for Children and Adolescents: A coalition of 25 local and international non-governmental organizations and networks that promote child development.

Indicator: A quantitative or qualitative measure of the development or the status of a specific dimension, aspect or right fulfillment in the life of a child and adolescent.

Partners: Local non-governmental organizations with whom Children Believe establishes a relationship to implement long term and child-centred community development programs.

ACRONYM

ADDNA*	Association for the Defence of Children's Rights
ADRA	Adventist Development and Relief Agency
CB	Children Believe
CCFC	Christian Children's Fund of Canada (The former name of Children Believe)
CIRD*	Centre of Information and Resources for Development
CDIA*	Coordinator for the Rights of Children and Adolescents
CODENI*	Municipal Council for Children's Rights
CONAPREA*	National Commission for the Prevention and Comprehensive Care of Violence Against Children
CORORE**	I Love Remansito Committee
DGEEC*	General Directorate of Statistics, Surveys and Censuses
DIT	Early Childhood Development Program
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
MERCOSUR*	Southern Common Market
MINNA*	Ministry for Children and Adolescents
ONNAP*	National Centre for the Protection of Children and Adolescents of Paraguay
RCAN*	Child-Friendly Accountability
REDNNA*	National Children's Network
REDPI*	Network of Civil Society Organizations for Early Childhood
SAT	Early Care Services
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
TFCF	Taiwan Fund for Children and Families
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNIBE*	Ibero-American University of Paraguay
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund

** For its acronym in Spanish*

*** For its acronym in Spanish, which includes the Guaraní (an official indigenous language of Paraguay) word "Rohayhu" meaning, "to love".*

ACRONYM

INTRODUCTION

The 20 Commitments motivation and objectives

The 20 Commitments to Children and Adolescents was an advocacy effort in Paraguay involving close cooperation between Children Believe (CB) and non-governmental allies and networks including the Front for Children and Adolescents (Front), with the aim of driving positive change for and investments in children within the structure of the national government. Using the framework of 20 specific commitments to children that are aligned to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the coalition sought to achieve national government buy-in, ratification, implementation and monitoring of the commitments.

This case study examines CB's contribution to the advocacy effort to realize the 20 Commitments to Children and Adolescents. A pivotal moment included the signing of the commitments by Paraguay's newly elected President, Mario Abdo Benítez, in 2018, which propelled allegiance to the commitments by his government and set the stage for implementation and monitoring.

The case study provides background information, including the inception of the work starting with Paraguay's former president, Horacio Cartes, as well as the results accomplished through the advocacy effort. Subsequently, it presents how each achievement was realized through the process with description and analysis, providing the methodological framework for success.

This study also describes the significant participation of children and adolescents in this work.

Finally, the case study concludes with recommendations on sustaining and expanding on the three major achievements accomplished, proposes ways of overcoming the challenges still present, and suggests ways to capitalize on the threekey

learnings of the overall work.

Children Believe is an international non-governmental organization based in Canada and a member of ChildFund Alliance,¹ a global network of 12 child-focused development organizations working to create opportunities for children and youth, their families and communities. ChildFund helps nearly 23 million children and their families in more than 70 countries to overcome poverty and the underlying conditions that prevent children from achieving their full potential.

Children Believe works in 12 countries, with offices in Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Ghana, India, Nicaragua, and Paraguay² and with local allies in El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Malawi, México, and Rwanda. Children Believe was founded in 1960 and began operations in Paraguay in 1995.

Children Believe provides children with the tools and training they need to access education, overcome barriers and be a force for change. Children Believe's priority areas of work involve supporting thriving communities, advancing child rights and protection, promoting equality for girls and partnering with children for change.

This is the second in the *Breaking barriers to education* series of reports sharing knowledge and lessons learned from Children Believe programs. This is the first of four case studies in the *Advocating for Child Protection against Violence* series, by Children Believe Paraguay.

With these publications, Children Believe Paraguay, as a Centre of Excellence for Child Participation and Protection, together with its three partner organizations Fundación Alda, Global Infancia and Crecer, contributes to the generation and dissemination of knowledge about issues that impact children and adolescents. It does so based on specific expertise in advocacy which has been strengthened over the last seven years.

¹ ChildFund Alliance works in partnership with children and their communities, with the goal to create lasting change, and the participation of children themselves is a key component of this approach. The ChildFund Alliance Secretariat, based in New York, U.S.A., oversees day-to-day operations. It develops and works with members to implement Alliance-wide strategy, standards and policies. The Secretariat represents the Alliance at international forums such as the United Nations and the European Union.

² Children Believe Paraguay's core programming is financed by the contributions of Canadian and Taiwanese donors, channeled mainly through child sponsorship and supplemented with resources from other sources for specific projects.

A CIVIL SOCIETY HOLDING THE NATION'S LEADER ACCOUNTABLE FOR CHILD WELLBEING

Paraguay is a landlocked country in South America with a population of 7.3 million people as of 2020, 39 percent of whom are under age 19 (DGEEC, 2015). Of that, 33.8 percent of the population under age 18 live in poverty (DGEEC, 2018).

The average time spent in formal education for most of the population is 8.8 years (DGEEC, 2018). Also, 52.1 percent of children under the age of 15 experience violent discipline (DGEEC-UNICEF, 2016).

In 1990 the country ratified the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and installed the National System of Promotion and Comprehensive Protection of Children's Rights. The system clearly establishes the complementary roles in each of the governmental levels: national, departmental and municipal. The capital city is Asunción and the country is organized in 17 departments, with 245 cities.

The Ministry of Children and Adolescents is a new federal ministry responsible for planning and implementing policies that benefits children, mainly the most vulnerable, of Paraguay.

In 2013, the Front promoted the signing of the 20 Commitments to improve the quantity and efficiency of investment in children and adolescents. In April of that year, the presidential candidates for the 2013-2018 government signed these commitments which, if elected, they pledged to ratify.

The Front is a coalition of institutions that aims to promote compliance with the rights of children and adolescents in the public and political agenda.

At that time, the Front was promoted and coordinated



Children Believe has worked in Paraguay since 1995, becoming a Centre of Excellence in Child Participation and Protection.

by UNICEF and included SOS Children's Villages Paraguay, the Centre of Information and Resources for Development (CIRD), Fe y Alegría, Children Believe (CB), Dequení Foundation, Teleton Foundation Paraguay, Global Infancia, Paraguay Educa, Plan International, United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Juntos por la Educación (Together for Education), Coordinator for the Rights of Children and Adolescents (CDIA), Save the Children, and Asociación Trinidad Comunicación, Cultura y Desarrollo.

In 2017, during the second phase of the advocacy endeavour, which will be discussed in greater detail in this study, the Front was joined by the National Children's Network (REDNNA) as well as by Crecer, FortaleSer, Grupo SUNU de Acción Intercultural, Fundación La Salle Paraguay, Network of Civil Society Organizations for Early Childhood (REDPI), Red Viva Paraguay, Fundación Alda, ADRA Paraguay, Universidad Iberoamericana del Paraguay (UNIBE), and Luna Nueva (New Moon) Group. In this new phase, coordination of the advocacy effort was assumed jointly by CB and Plan International.

Initially, the 20 Commitments did not have a structured and representative set of indicators, or a monitoring and evaluation system that would make it possible to objectively measure progress towards compliance. And the efforts to design and implement such a system weren't significant or sustained.



A renewed and strengthened Front, under the joint coordination of CB and Plan International, was officially announced to the public in December 2017. (Pictured, from left to right, are representatives of Dequeni, Plan International, Children Believe, SOS Children's Villages Paraguay, and Global Infancia).

Only at the end of 2017 did a renewed and strengthened Front create a structure for compliance with the 20 Commitments, based on the national government's official annual reports. Therefore, the scope of the work was limited.

Due to the structure put in place to implement the work, the 20 Commitments have resulted in tangible milestones achieved over the years. The current progress made in compliance for each is represented in Table 1³:

Table 1: The 20 Commitments to improve the quantity and efficiency of investment in children and adolescents 2013-2018

No.	Commitments 2013	Progress made by 2017
1.	Increase in public investment for children.	Stagnation or poor progress
2.	Inclusion of children's issues in the principal tools for planning at the central level.	Process consolidated and progress made toward the target
3.	Strengthening of the National System of Promotion and Comprehensive Protection of Children's Rights.	Process consolidated and progress made toward the target
4.	Strengthening of the role of the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents. Promotion of an adequate budget for the Municipal Councils for Children's Rights (CODENIs).	Process consolidated and progress made toward the target
		Impossible to evaluate for lack of information
5.	Appointment of a suitable person as secretary/minister of children and adolescents.	Process consolidated and progress made toward the target
6.	Reduction of maternal and child mortality, especially of neonatal mortality.	Stagnation or poor progress

KEY: ■ Process consolidated and progress made toward the target ■ Stagnation or poor progress ■ Regression ■ Impossible to evaluate for lack of information





³An assessment of the achievements and limitations of the 20 Commitments during the period 2013-2018 can be found in: Front for Children and Adolescents, Sistematización sobre el cumplimiento de los 20 Compromisos con la niñez y adolescencia. Resumen de los informes del Gobierno Nacional respecto a los 20 Compromisos en favor de la niñez y la adolescencia 2013-2017 [Systematization of compliance with

A civil society holding the nation's leader

accountable for child wellbeing

the 20 Commitments to Children and Adolescents. Summary of the National Government's reports with respect to the 20 Commitments to Children 2013-2017, Asunción, December 2017, 34 pp.

No.	Commitments 2013	Progress made by 2017
7.	Budget increase for the effective implementation and monitoring of the Early Childhood Nutritional Guarantee Law.	Stagnation or poor progress
8.	Access to improved water in rural areas. Access to improved sanitation in rural areas.	Process consolidated and progress made toward the target Stagnation or poor progress
9.	Universal access to the educational system for children and adolescents. Universal access to the educational system for children and adolescents from poor populations.	Process consolidated and progress made toward the target Regression
10.	Promote nomination of the Public Defender for Children and Adolescents before the end of the second year of the legislature.	Impossible to evaluate for lack of information
11.	Budget increase for the prevention and eradication of child labour, and the decentralization of its management. Increase in coverage of programs for the prevention and eradication of child labour.	Stagnation or poor progress Regression
12.	Promotion of legal and institutional reform to strengthen universal, timely and free birth registrations, and increase birth registrations by 10 percent per year.	Process consolidated and progress made toward the target
13.	Promotion of effective compliance with the Adoption Law.	Impossible to evaluate for lack of information
14.	Progressive reduction in the number of institutionalized children.	Impossible to evaluate for lack of information
15.	Promotion of the protection of children and adolescents from all forms of violence, mistreatment, and abuse; the improvement of inter-institutional articulation; and the promotion of specific laws against violence. Assistance for child and adolescent victims of all forms of violence, mistreatment, and abuse. Promotion of improvement in the systems for case registration and statistics.	Process consolidated and progress made toward the target Stagnation or poor progress Impossible to evaluate for lack of information
16.	Articulated implementation of the National Plan for Early Childhood. Effective implementation of the National Plan for Early Childhood.	Process consolidated and progress made toward the target Impossible to evaluate for lack of information
17.	Increase in the number of health services for adolescents. Detection of sexual transmission of HIV/AIDS in adolescents. Strengthening retention of adolescents in school and the prevention of adolescent pregnancy.	Process consolidated and progress made toward the target Stagnation or poor progress Regression
18.	Strengthening of the Family Health Units in order to implement the Early Childhood Development Program (DIT). Improvement of early detection of children with disabilities. Promotion of Early Care Services (SAT) for timely treatment and support for the process of developing an inclusive education law.	Impossible to evaluate for lack of information Impossible to evaluate for lack of information Impossible to evaluate for lack of information
19.	Promotion of access to culturally appropriate education for indigenous children and adolescents. Promotion of access to development opportunities with cultural identity for indigenous children and adolescents.	Stagnation or poor progress Regression
20.	Establishment of an annual public accountability to these commitments to children, adolescents and society in general. Promotion of opportunities for the public accountability to these commitments in the Legislative Branch and at the departmental and municipal levels.	Process consolidated and progress made toward the target Impossible to evaluate for lack of information

KEY:  Process consolidated and progress made toward the target  Stagnation or poor progress  Regression  Impossible to evaluate for lack of information



President of Paraguay Mario Abdo Benítez (centre), Minister of Children and Adolescents Teresa Martínez (left) and Children Believe country director Jorge Méndez Rheineck (seated beside the President) sign the ratification of the 20 Commitments to Children and Adolescents.

TWENTY MEASURABLE COMMITMENTS IN FAVOUR OF CHILDREN

During the 2018 electoral period and before the formulation of the new agenda for the 20 Commitments, the Front, under the leadership of CB and five other member organizations (Global Infancia, Dequení Foundation, SOS Children's Villages Paraguay, Plan International, and Asociación Trinidad), decided to give new urgency to this important space for advocacy with a new structure, shared commitment and a broader scope.

As a result, the number of civil society organizations participating in the Front increased substantially and with this it has become more representative, not only because of the increased number of organizations, but also for

their thematic diversity. The inclusion of all partners was essential, but those that stand out are the National Children's Network (REDNNA) and the Network of Civil Society Organizations for Early Childhood (REDPI).

The learnings from the 2013 efforts helped formulate our strategies in 2018, leading to the signing of the 20 Commitments by the two candidates most likely to win. Later, on August 16, 2018, as his first public act, President Mario Abdo Benítez ratified the 20 Commitments at the Government Palace in the presence of children, adolescents, and representatives of the new government, including the minister for Children and Adolescents, and of civil society.

The 20 Commitments⁴ for the period of 2018-2023 are:

1. Increase public investment in children and adolescents.
2. Strengthen the National System of Promotion and Comprehensive Protection of Children's Rights.
3. Strengthen the role of the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents as the lead agency and focal point in policies for children.
4. Expand access to, and coverage for, improved water and sanitation services with emphasis on the rural sector.
5. Universalize early childhood care, with emphasis on the first 1,000 days.
6. Universalize access, coverage, and quality of public primary healthcare services for girls, boys, adolescents, pregnant women, and mothers.
7. Expand access to, and coverage for, primary sexual and reproductive health services.
8. Put an end to epidemics of AIDS and other communicable diseases in children and adolescents.
9. Promote equal opportunities and empowerment for children and adolescents in different areas for the full development of their abilities.
10. Expand access to and improve the retention, quality, and equity of education.
11. Strengthen comprehensive care services for children and adolescents with disabilities.
12. Universalize birth and identity registration for children and adolescents.
13. Promote efficient adoptions and reduce the number of children who are institutionalized.
14. Protect children and adolescents from all forms of violence, with emphasis on mistreatment, abuse, and physical and humiliating punishment.
15. Eradicate the worst forms of child labour and protect adolescent work.
16. Improve the quality of life of indigenous children and adolescents.
17. Carry out an annual public accountability to these commitments by the Executive Branch on the 20 Commitments, and promote a similar process at departmental and municipal levels.
18. Strengthen the meaningful participation of children and adolescents in public decisions that affect them.
19. Ensure comprehensive assistance for adolescents in conflict with the law.
20. Promote recreation, play, and participation in artistic and cultural activities for children and adolescents.

BOX 1: INTERVIEW WITH OLEGARIO OLMEDO, Director of SOS Children's Villages Paraguay

We have been working with the Front since 2013, but it was around 2015 that we saw the need to work and move forward in alliance with civil society organizations in order to connect with the public, which would allow us to do a better job for children.

SOS Children's Villages Paraguay, as well as Plan Paraguay and Children Believe, saw the need to promote something like the Front. It was around the work we had been doing at the international level in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals, in point 16.2 that we considered to be most necessary, which is to end abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence and torture against children.

The fact that the Global Partnership to End Violence Against Children was created, in the United Nations, gave us strength to promote the Front initiative. The response was almost immediate. In

a short time there were 23 organizations, and more wanted to join.

The organizations that currently (2020) coordinate the Front are: SOS Children's Villages Paraguay, Plan Paraguay, Children Believe, Dequení Foundation, and Global Infancia.

The Front is in a process of development. We have gone from proposing an agenda of 20 Commitments to Children and Adolescents to presidential candidates, to creating a series of strategies related to their implementation. We realized that it wasn't enough for the commitments to be signed by the candidates; that in reality they needed to become public policy.

So we saw the need to work together with government institutions that are linked to the

successful delivery of the commitments, the construction of indicators and a monitoring system to track progress. We have made some progress on that.

This work has been valuable to strengthen the Ministry for Children and Adolescents as the lead agency, but also to build bridges between civil society and the state in fulfilling the 20 Commitments.

In this work with the Front, the leadership of Children Believe has been key. There have been important lessons learned. We have understood that this type of initiative requires the investment of resources, human as well as financial. It is advocacy work. We need to keep working on the sustainability of these initiatives. CB has been on the right track for advocacy.

With the 20 Commitments signed by the government, the Front became part of the National Council for Children and Adolescents, which is the authority on the National System of Promotion and Comprehensive Protection of Children's Rights.

STEPS TO REALIZE THE PRESIDENT'S AGENDA

As the 20 Commitments are aligned with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), they set the tone in practice, and guide the national priorities for children.

In 2017 and 2018, the 20 Commitments were reformulated and specific measurement indicators established for each. Every indicator has a data or metadata record, in such a way that there is shared understanding of its definition, purpose, interpretation, calculation methodology, source, and frequency.

According to an evaluation commissioned by the Front, 41 percent of the indicators pertain to the health and education sectors. Also, 57 percent of the indicators require creating a register that corresponds to the institution or institutions responsible for, or involved in, ensuring compliance with the commitment, while 23 percent require periodic application or improvements in the existing surveys by the government.

Without a doubt, the greatest challenge for follow-up of the Commitments is the statistical register⁵.

“We are working to fulfill the commitments made to children and adolescents. From the government we make the maximum effort and even more so in the context of the pandemic to guarantee the full enjoyment of the rights of girls, boys and adolescents. This global context presents us with new challenges, that of seeking effective and innovative mechanisms for the effective implementation of rights. I invite all of society to continue participating actively to build together the Paraguay that we all dream of. I am convinced that if we change the beginning of the story, we can change the whole story.” **President Mario Abdo Benítez**, at the opening of the 2020 edition of the annual government accountability event, to children and adolescents.

The organizations belonging to the Front organized workshops to define and agree upon the 20 Commitments.

These delineations, which were presented to the

⁵Barrios, Elizabeth, Factibilidad de Construcción de Indicadores: 20 Compromisos en Favor de la Niñez y la Adolescencia [Feasibility of the Construction of

Steps to realize the president's agenda

presidential candidates together with the commitments, led to the identification and creation of indicators to evaluate progress made toward compliance with the commitments.

The work of implementing the 20 Commitments clearly presents four phases:

Pre presidential election

- Organizational strengthening of the Front
- Definition of the 20 Commitments
- Compliance assessment of the previous 20 Commitments
- Identification of indicators to measure the compliance of the commitments

Presidential election

- Public dissemination of the assessment of the previous 20 Commitments and new commitments
- Meeting with presidential candidates and their technical teams
- Signing of the 20 Commitments with the presidential candidates most likely to be elected

Preparations to the signing of the 20 Commitments by the newly elected President

- Meeting with the designated officials of the newly elected president
- Support elected government in the preparation of the ratification of the 20 Commitments event at the

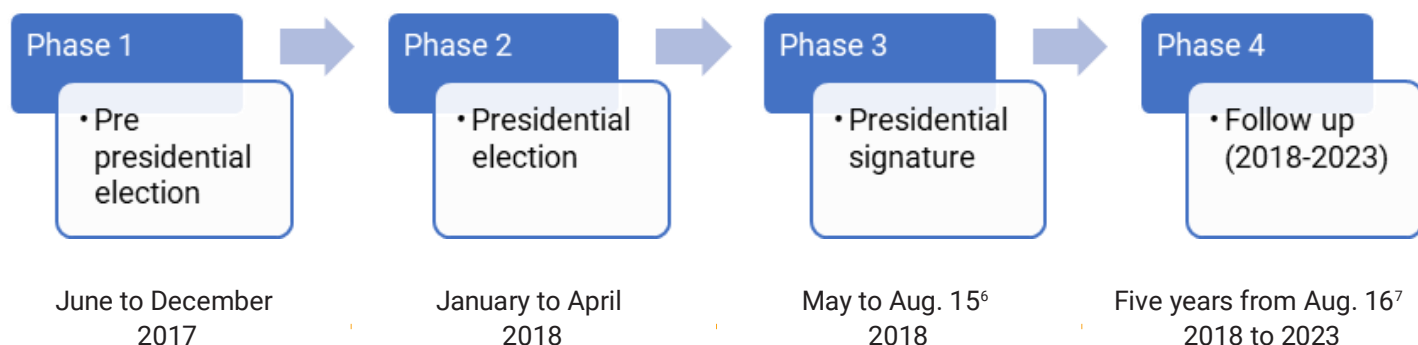
Government Palace

- Determine existing and missing indicators to monitor the 20 Commitments

Follow up with the new government

- Ratification of the 20 Commitments by the new President at the Government Palace on the first day in office on Children's Day
- Reaching an agreement with government about: a) the set of indicators to be used for measuring compliance with the commitments, and b) the compliance monitoring system to be implemented
- Supporting the government to incorporate the Commitments in their strategic plans
- Revising the Annual Report prepared by the government specifically with regard to the compliance of the 20 Commitments
- Supporting the National Network of Children and Adolescents through an annual interface to assess the government's annual report
- Co-organizing with government its annual event to present its annual report to civil society and specifically to children and adolescents
- Preparation and dissemination of the annual assessment of the government's Annual Report
- Realization of advocacy activities with regard to key policy issues

Diagram 1: Four phases to install the 20 Commitments to Children and Adolescents into the presidential agenda



Steps to realize the president's agenda

⁶ Aug. 15, 2018 is when the newly elected president assumed his mandate and is also the national day of founding of the city of Asuncion (1537).
⁷ Aug. 16 is recognized annually in Paraguay as Children's Day, to honor those children that fought and died in the Acosta Ñu battle in 1869.



Front members, Ministry of Children representatives, Children Believe Paraguay and UNICEF at a session on building system indicators.

MONITORING COMPLIANCE WITH THE COMMITMENTS

The monitoring system for the 20 Commitments includes prioritizing the indicators to measure progress made toward compliance, as well as identifying a baseline and target for each indicator.

The Front and the Paraguay Government work together on the system of indicators. However, they can disagree on the prioritization or definition of the government's targets, precisely because the Front intends to promote the required structural transformations – including budgetary, fiscal, and organizational – which are necessary to optimize compliance with the commitments.

Since the greatest challenge is the availability of statistical information for follow-up on compliance with the 20 Commitments, the Front's priority has been to establish the monitoring system together with the government.

For this purpose, working groups were organized for each commitment, made up of members of the Ministry for Children and Adolescents, the Front, and the public institutions responsible for each sector or issue related to the commitment. Each of the Front's

member organizations is responsible for at least one of the commitments, or for supporting the member organization that is designated as responsible.

Presented below are the monitoring indicators for the five commitments most directly related to the case study, that is to say, those which refer to investments in children, the system of protection, the authority responsible for protection, safeguarding children from violence, the participation of children and adolescents, and public accountability to these commitments.

These indicators were proposed to the government and are being revised by each institution according to the topic. Most existed already, but others were proposed specifically to ensure monitoring and compliance of all commitments.

Compliance of commitment No. 10, referring to education, included the development of more than 60 indicators that represent approximately 25 percent of all indicators of the 20 Commitments. They measure the status from early childhood education through to secondary and technical education. Together, these indicators promote universal access to, quality of and equity in education. They are aligned with the national official indicators, and international indicators, as well.

No.	Commitment	Proposed indicators
1.	Increase public investment in children and adolescents.	<p>1.1. Percentage of public spending on children and adolescents with respect to GDP (macroeconomic priority) [disaggregated by direct, indirect, expanded (central administration), and decentralized expenses].</p> <p>1.2. Percentage of public budget (fiscal priority) for the sectors of education, health, social protection, and water.</p> <p>1.3. Establishment of a technical working group in the National Council for Children and Adolescents to follow up on the 20 Commitments, with the participation of the Ministry of Finance.</p> <p>1.4. Enactment of a law for an investment fund for children and adolescents, to be administered by MINNA.</p> <p>1.5. Percentage annual increase in MINNA's budget.</p>
14.	Protect children and adolescents from all forms of violence, with emphasis on mistreatment, abuse, and physical and humiliating punishment.	<p>14.1. Percentage of children and adolescents aged 1 to 14 years who have experienced psychological aggression at home.</p> <p>14.2. Percentage of children and adolescents aged 1 to 14 years who have received any form of physical punishment at home.</p> <p>14.3. Percentage of children and adolescents aged 1 to 14 years who have experienced any violent method of discipline at home.</p> <p>14.4. Percentage of adolescents in detention centres who are victims of violence, mistreatment, sexual abuse or physical punishment.</p> <p>14.5. Percentage of children and adolescents who have suffered or experienced any form of violence, according to complaints made in CODENI, the District Attorney's Office, or the Office of the Public Defender for Children and Adolescents.</p> <p>14.6. Number of transitory public and private shelters for child and adolescent victims of violence or trafficking that are open in different zones of the country.</p> <p>14.7. Creation and implementation of a National Program to Prevent and Combat Human Trafficking within the framework of the law that governs it.</p> <p>14.8. Law No. 5659/16 on good treatment to children: Promotion of good treatment, positive upbringing and protection of children and adolescents against physical punishment or any type of violence as a method of correction and discipline</p> <p>14.9. Percentage of students who have suffered any form of violence in the school setting.</p> <p>14.10. Percentage of children and adolescents who have suffered peer harassment in the school setting.</p> <p>14.11. Percentage of children and adolescents who have suffered teacher harassment in the school setting.</p> <p>14.12. Percentage of complaints by children and adolescents aged 10 to 17 years who have suffered or experienced online violence.</p> <p>14.13. Number of national campaigns to prevent online violence.</p> <p>14.14. Number of assistance programs for children and adolescents who are victims of any form of violence.</p> <p>14.15. Time in which cases of sexual abuse of children and adolescents are resolved, counted from when the complaint is made to the final sentence.</p> <p>14.16. Percentage of adults who believe that children and adolescents should be physically punished.</p> <p>14.17. Number of meetings held of the National Commission for the Prevention and Comprehensive Care of Violence Against Children, per year.</p> <p>14.18. Annual report on implementation of the Country Action Plan: Paraguay and Child Protection against Abuse and All Forms of Violence.</p> <p>14.19. Approval and implementation of the Comprehensive Policy for Positive Parenting.</p> <p>14.20. Design and implementation of a National Program for Positive Parenting within the framework of the Comprehensive Policy for Positive Parenting.</p>

15.	Eradicate the worst forms of child labour and protect adolescent work.	<p>15.1. Percentage of children and adolescents living in monetary poverty that receive benefits from the Programa Tekoporã [Living Well Program].</p> <p>15.2. Percentage of children and adolescents living on the street who were incorporated into the Programa Abrazo [Program Hug].</p> <p>15.3. Percentage of children and adolescents in social programs for the prevention and eradication of the worst forms of child labour (Tekoporã and Abrazo), per year.</p> <p>15.4. Number of adolescents (aged 14 to 17 years) who participate in technical labour training offered by public sector programs, per year.</p> <p>15.5. Number of children and adolescents doing unpaid domestic work in other people's homes (criadazgo).</p> <p>15.6. Percentage of children and adolescents, aged 5 to 17 years, who have carried out economic activities for a number of hours below the threshold for their age.</p> <p>15.7. Percentage of children and adolescents, aged 5 to 17 years, who have carried out economic activities for a number of hours at or above the threshold for their age.</p> <p>15.8. Update of the National Strategy for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labour and Protection of Adolescent Work.</p>
17.	Carry out an annual public accountability to these commitments by the Executive Branch on the 20 Commitments, and promote a similar process at the departmental and municipal levels.	<p>17.1. Events for public accountability to the commitments to children and adolescents held by MINNA.</p> <p>17.2. MERCOSUR directives for public accountability to these commitments to children and adolescents implemented annually.</p> <p>17.3. Establishment of a joint Front-government mechanism to monitor compliance with the 20 Commitments.</p> <p>17.4. Number of actions promoted by the Executive Branch to encourage annual public accountability to these commitments, by departmental and municipal governments for the children and adolescents in their territories.</p>
18.	Strengthen the meaningful participation of children and adolescents in public decisions that affect them.	<p>18.1. Number of organizations and networks of children and adolescents that are part of REDNNA, disaggregated by department.</p> <p>18.2. Creation and implementation of a program for training and promotion of meaningful participation of children and adolescents.</p> <p>18.3. The percentage of grades at elementary educational institutions that have class councils.</p> <p>18.4. Percentage of secondary educational institutions that have student centres.</p> <p>18.5. Percentage of children and adolescents that participate in organized groups.</p> <p>18.6. Percentage of municipal councils that have representatives of children and adolescents.</p> <p>18.7. Percentage of departmental councils that have representatives of children and adolescents.</p>



Leaders from ADDNA and REDNNA, working, learning, discussing and analyzing progress on the 20 Commitments.

EMPOWERING CHILDREN TO INFLUENCE A PRESIDENTIAL AGENDA

The historical experience of child participation in Paraguay constitutes building on a social capital which facilitates and favours the involvement of children and adolescents in the 20 Commitments initiative.

Indeed, when REDNNA was officially invited to become part of the Front in 2017, promoted by Children Believe, the opportunity was accepted with enthusiasm and responsibility. In order to strengthen REDNNA in its new platform for advocacy, Children Believe and other member organizations of the Front financed a three-day workshop in which its leaders discussed the 20 Commitments and presented their reflections to the Front.

These workshops, like those promoted by Children Believe for ADDNA, even if they have a specific purpose, always dedicate part of the day to organizational strengthening and management capabilities, as well as to rights advocacy in general.

Both REDNNA and ADDNA have systematically promoted the meaningful participation of children and adolescents.

“We have installed an investment table with the Parliamentary Front for Children, which has been reactivated within the framework of the fulfillment of the 20 Commitments. And I want to point out that investment in childhood is not only investment from the Ministry of Children, but includes all actions that affect children’s rights. Together we are working on a proposal for an exclusive fund for investment in childhood.”

Teresa Martínez, Minister of Childhood and Adolescence, Government of Paraguay, introducing the act of accountability to children and adolescents 2020.

The two networks have received continuous support from Children Believe, but especially ADDNA, as it is active in the territories of the programs implemented by Children Believe and its partner organizations.

In 2018, REDNNA’s leaders, in a training camp shared with the leaders of ADDNA, agreed that ADDNA would work on advocacy at the local and departmental levels, while REDNNA would do so at the national level. Therefore, elements of

Child-Friendly Accountability⁸ (RCAN) are used by both of the networks at those levels.

Children and adolescents carried out a series of initiatives to reflect on the implementation processes of the 20 Commitments in public policy. In addition to contributing to the formulation of public policy with regard to children in general, as members of the Front they had committed to

focusing their follow-up efforts on two commitments.

First, commitment 14, to protect children and adolescents from all forms of violence, with emphasis on mistreatment, abuse, and physical and humiliating punishment. Second, commitment 18, to strengthen the participation of children and adolescents in the public decisions that affect them.

BOX 2: INTERVIEW WITH VERONICA SAMUDIO, former sponsored child and community leader

I began to work with Global Infancia only a few months ago. I work in Remansito. I have known the experience of working with the Protection Stoplight⁹ strategy, as well as with Child-Friendly Accountability, for many years now. I also know the strategy for the 20 Commitments to Children and Adolescents, because as an adolescent I represented CORORE (a committee of children and adolescents from the community) in several meetings.

It was very efficient work that we did on childhood itself. It was a very important achievement for us that the State assumed with us the commitment to comply with children's rights. The 20 Commitments are a valuable tool for demanding rights; that way we can say to the president, to the children's minister, and to our protection system, "You aren't complying with this."

We, as children and adolescents, also brought the 20 Commitments to our municipality and to our department, and said to the local authorities that they should also make a commitment to us. It was to make a kind of mini-commitment.

These were the needs that we saw in our community. We called them the 10 Commitments to work with the candidates for mayor, and then when the mayor took office, we visited him again and followed-up on the commitments he had made to us. In this way, we got CODENI to go at least twice a month to serve the Remansito Community Centre. We also got our library equipped.

The 20 Commitments have been a mechanism to pressure the authorities to do their duty to support us and our communities.

During 2018, ADDNA held three training camps to learn, discuss, and analyze progress made on the 20 Commitments signed by the president of the Republic and all of the key players involved in the fulfillment of the work.

In the first camp, children and adolescents received training from the staff of MINNA as well as of Global Infancia, a member of the Front. This was to strengthen their understanding of what it meant to follow-up and

monitor targets at the national level. The training included the nature and purpose of the indicators used.

The second camp was focused on how to contact local governments in order to raise their awareness of the 20 Commitments. Representatives of REDNNA were invited for the third training camp, given the network's national scope and that ADDNA is a member. One key result of the camp was that members of ADDNA and REDNNA agreed to work

⁸ Child-Friendly Accountability is a process by which children are empowered and able to meaningfully participate in making certain that those charged with protecting and fulfilling children's rights do what they are supposed to do in accordance with their obligations under international human rights law, and if they do not or cannot, that children and their representatives have some recourse. ChildFund Alliance, Child-Friendly Accountability in the Context of Target 16.2: Recommended Methodology, January 2017.

⁹ The Protection Stoplight strategy was developed by Christian Children's Fund of Canada Paraguay (CCFC, the former name of Children Believe) and Global Infancia, with support from the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents. The purpose was to develop a "warning system" akin to traffic lights whereby children in situations of potential risk could be identified according to green, yellow, and red levels (red being the highest), and appropriate action

Empowering children

to influence a presidential agenda

would be taken to protect them based on the risk level. The ultimate goal was to end violence against children and adolescents in Paraguay. Protection Stoplight, Global Infancia, December 2015.

together on advocacy and monitoring actions, specifically for the two commitments previously mentioned.

In the third camp, held November 29-30, 2018, children and adolescents learned about the process of public accountability to these commitments and worked on the creation of indicators to measure progress on these two commitments.

The declaration of this meeting illustrates the degree of ownership of the 20 Commitments process by both networks of children and adolescents¹⁰:

The boys, girls and adolescents gathered in the joint meeting of the Association for the Defence of Children’s Rights (ADDNA) and the National Children’s Network (REDNNA), have been analyzing and contributing indicators for commitments No. 14 and No. 18 in the framework of the 20 Commitments formulated by the Front. Accordingly, we request that these indicators be considered by the Ministry for Children, for compliance with both commitments assumed by the current government.

The declaration continues with a list of the indicators for commitments No. 14 and No. 18. These indicators were presented at a plenary session of the Front by a representative of REDNNA. After each had been presented and analyzed, they were introduced into the list of indicators by common agreement. Independent of the Front, the children’s organizations of ADDNA, based on their experience, conducted training for their peers at school to discuss the 20 Commitments, and children’s rights in general.

With this process, and based on the history of child participation in Paraguay, the organizations of children and adolescents have succeeded in further strengthening their legitimacy and capacity for advocacy. They are consulted periodically by the authorities of government institutions, as well as by civil society and international organizations, on issues related to children.

This legitimacy has been won with hard work and perseverance. Important strides have been made in the consultation process for the design of public policies, but over the last six years, greater presence and leadership in the control and follow-up of the implementation of policies has also been gained.

Diagram 2: Four agency opportunities for children and adolescents during the 20 Commitments implementation



¹⁰ The declaration can be found in: Benegas, Mabel, Red Nacional de Niñez y Adolescencia. Memoria REDNNA 2014-2019, Proyecto “Centros de referencia de participación y liderazgo de niños, niñas y adolescentes para la protección de sus derechos” [National Children’s Network, REDNNA Annual Report 2014-2019, Project: “Centres of reference for participation and leadership of children and adolescents for the protection of their rights”], Children Believe and Global Infancia, financed by the Taiwan Fund for Children and Families (TFCF), August, 2019, 40 pp.



REDNNA representatives, already active members of the Front, met in 2018 with the two main candidates for the presidency of Paraguay, along with other Front members, prior to the national election.

The 20 Commitments are a clear example of agency cooperation. Since their introduction, the government has been systematic in public accountability to these commitments to children and adolescents.

Since the end of 2017, children and adolescents of the Front have made strides and now have a greater capacity for advocacy.

It is worth noting that the Paraguay Government's public accountability to these commitments process has been replicated, to a certain extent, by some of the

government departments with which Children Believe and other members of the Front cooperate.

In 2019, REDNNA's delegates held a session to evaluate the first year of the national government's efforts for children, with the Minister for Children and Adolescents. At this event, REDNNA also presented its own survey, which had been carried out in 2019 via social networks, about the concerns of children and adolescents with respect to the exercise of their rights, principally those of protection from violence and participation.

It is important to highlight REDNNA's efforts in the application of the online survey, which was completed by more than 1,300 children and adolescents nationwide. In disseminating the survey results, REDNNA took advantage of the opportunity to advocate for change by presenting the results to the public on several occasions, including at the presentation of the National Government's Annual Report.

ARTICULATING AGENTS OF CHANGE: CHILDREN BELIEVE'S LEADING ROLE

Children Believe and its partner organizations are members of the Front.

Children Believe leads coordination of the Front together with Plan International. They are joined by Dequení Foundation, Global Infancia, and SOS Children's Villages Paraguay on the Coordination Committee.

The Fundación Alda, Crecer, and FortaleSer – a former Children Believe partner – are also key players in the Front.

In this initiative, the leadership shown by Children Believe in developing a favourable relationship with other organizations for the reactivation, reorganization, strengthening and promotion of the Front, is particularly significant. Children Believe took the lead in inviting or convening the majority of the organizations incorporated into the Front in its second stage, that is, as of 2017.

In managing the process efforts, Children Believe encouraged opportunities for engagement within the Front. It has promoted and obtained the technical and financial cooperation of members for the Front's specific actions and strategies; for example, the support to REDNNA in organizing and managing a three-day workshop after joining the Front to discuss the 20 Commitments and consider their own commitments for the 2018 presidential candidates.

Children Believe's channels of communication with the Front's other organizations, as well as with government entities, are ongoing and consistent.

As soon as the president of the Republic announced the appointment of the current minister for Children and Adolescents, the Front promoted contact and meetings with her in such a way that the 20 Commitments were inserted into the agenda of the current government. This was facilitated by the fact that the president of the Republic himself, in his previous conversation with the future minister, had presented her with the 20 Commitments.

The definition of disaggregated indicators to measure progress in the implementation of the 20 Commitments is also an initiative promoted by Children Believe. One specific contribution, co-financed together with SOS Children's Villages Paraguay, Dequení Foundation, FortaleSer, and Plan International, was the formulation of indicators for the 20 Commitments followed by a diagnosis of their feasibility.

The leadership to coordinate work among teams in order to define concrete targets and follow-up strategies has been very important in this initiative. The values of respect, solidarity, professionalism, and participation, as well as executive and results-based management, have been a constant in this interdisciplinary and multi-sectoral work.

At the same time, Children Believe has systematically facilitated the plenary sessions, prepared executive reports with the results of each plenary session held, and distributed them to members within 24 hours after the meeting.



Children Believe has participated actively from the beginning, and in this second phase of the Front, systematically facilitated the plenary sessions receiving all member representatives in its country office.

Articulating agents of change: Children Believe's leading role

In advancing the Front's work, along with other allies, Children Believe took the lead role in communication. This, in concert with other organizations committed to the Front, such as SOS Children's Villages Paraguay, Juntos por la Educación (Together for Education), Dequení Foundation, Plan International, Asociación Trinidad, and UNICEF.

Deserving of special mention in this area is the highly professional and cooperative work done by the organization Juntos por la Educación.

Together with CDIA, which supports the Front, Children Believe has also assumed the task of representing civil society on the Working Group for Investment in Children,

BOX 3: INTERVIEW WITH ALCIDES, adolescent representative of ADDNA before REDNNA



I began in the area of meaningful participation of children and adolescents when I was eight years old, which means I have been participating for 9 years. I began collaborating at school, in the school working groups. Later, I was invited by the school's principal to participate in the camps held by the Fundación Alda . . . I was 10 years old . . . in those years I didn't have much of an idea of what it was we were going to do . . . and now I realize all that we have accomplished.

In recent years I have made new friends, new companions. I've had the opportunity to share with kids from distant cities and districts of the country. We have worked a lot in training on rights and meaningful participation.

Through these camps we came to form the ADDNA – Association for the Defence of Children's Rights, and it's been over two years now since it was formed. We are in six departments and in eleven cities.

“REDNNA now has opportunities for international participation, and we have participated in meetings in Mexico, Uruguay, Sao Paulo, Canada, Switzerland, etc. In 2018, as REDNNA, and together with the Front, we were able to bring the presidential candidates together and have them sign the 20 Commitments to Children and Adolescents. Later, we got President Mario Abdo Benítez to ratify the 20 Commitments document when he assumed the presidency. The ratification was the first public act of his government.”

- Alcides

We were later invited to participate in REDNNA. This network is a much larger organization, at the national level. It is working with 15 of the country's 17 departments. We are 25 organizations. I'm going with another member to represent REDNNA in an inter-American encounter to be held in Cartagena where we will analyze the problems faced by children and adolescents in the region, as well as show them our work on the meaningful participation of children.

And we, as REDNNA, have promised to follow up on and monitor the Commitments, to see whether they are being fulfilled or not. It is a process we will continue throughout the period of this government. One of the first accomplishments that we've had already was to get the status of the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents raised to Ministry of Children and Adolescents. We consider this to be a great achievement. It's very significant, and shows us that we can achieve more.

an entity created and chaired by the Ministry for Children and Adolescents and composed of the Parliamentary Front, the Ministry of Finance, the Technical Secretariat for Planning, and the Social Cabinet of the Presidency of the Republic, among others. This working group follows up on compliance with commitment 1, to increase investment in children.

From within the working group, the Front articulated actions to advocate for an increase in MINNA's budget to the level requested by its own professional staff. This advocacy included issuing a communication to alert the public about the risk of a budget reduction. The second issue defined as a priority on the working group's agenda, and in which the Front had an important influence, is the creation of a legislative initiative to establish an investment fund for children.

At the same time, Children Believe aligned the efforts of MINNA's Office for Strategic Information for the purpose of uploading the indicators for the 20 Commitments to the webpage of the National Centre for the Protection of Children and Adolescents of Paraguay.

With this, through MINNA's platform, the public will have access to official information in order to follow up on the 20 Commitments. For this reason, the Front, through Plan International, provided specific technical cooperation to MINNA to make the adjustments to the centre's web page.

Children Believe has joined together with numerous non-governmental organizations that support the Ministry for Children and Adolescents in its function as lead agency for children. This collective support, added to the status of ministry, strengthened MINNA's positioning and leadership within the structure of the Executive Branch.

The Front's philosophy, shared by all members and accompanying organizations, is at its core about collaborating with government, even though on occasion it must report, complain, and criticize when there is evidence to do so. The Front is an ally of the government in power, free of political affiliations. Compliance with the 20 Commitments, although the responsibility of the president of the Republic, constitutes a national cause.

The 20 Commitments initiative shows Children Believe and its partner organizations to be dynamic, proactive, inclusive, and participatory actors, with a desire to be involved in shaping and implementing the national agenda on children and adolescents, in formulating relevant policies and plans, executing programs, and evaluating results.

This has also been accompanied, historically, by the openness of the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents in its time, and currently by the Ministry for Children and Adolescents, to welcome the participation of non-governmental organizations.

As has been seen, Children Believe has had an influence on the various mechanisms of child participation, be it through technical, logistical, or financial support.

As indicated by Álvarez, Campillo, Cruickshank, and Morales: "To advocate in public policy is to participate in an organized way to persuade other actors in the public sphere, in order to transform their perceptions, ideas, decisions, and/or actions."¹¹

In this sense, Children Believe has expanded its cooperation beyond the scope of strictly community-based development in Paraguay's vulnerable communities, to contribute decisively to initiatives that achieve social impact on a national scale. Moreover, with strong articulation with other non-governmental organizations, and with the public sector itself, it has expanded its scope of influence

¹¹ Tapia Álvarez, Mónica Campillo Carrete, Beatriz Cruickshank Soria, Susana Morales Sotomayor, Giovanna. Manual de Incidencia en Políticas Públicas. [Advocacy in Public Policy Manual], Alternativas y Capacidades A. C., First edition, México, March, 2010, p. 12.

BOX 4: FACTORS THAT FACILITATE ADVOCACY INITIATIVES

Some of the factors favouring opportunities for advocacy, can be seen in the example of Children Believe's case:

- Sufficient institutional autonomy to make timely and strategic decisions.
- Full technical and executive support from the Children Believe global team.
- A cohesive team of experienced professionals who are committed to advocacy.
- Sufficient technical and financial resources to implement low-cost, high-impact advocacy actions.
- Capacity to build agile, practical, and functional networks and alliances.
- Ability to link the management of one's own programs with advocacy actions.
- Willingness to put collective leadership and visibility, in cases of joint advocacy – which are the most frequent – before those of individual organizations.
- Willingness to cooperate with the government without losing an objective, critical eye.
- An institutional communication strategy intertwined with the actions and objectives of advocacy.
- Ability to recognize and to enhance the roles, strengths, and prestige of organizations, especially those of children and adolescents, in order to carry out collective advocacy actions.

to the construction of public policies at the regional and international levels.

Children Believe has followed a structure for advocacy with these phases: 1. Diagnosis; 2. Objective; 3. Stakeholders and alliances; 4. Proposals; 5. Strategies and actions (Plans); 6. Communication; 7. Resources and timeline; 8. Monitoring and evaluation; and 9. Systematization and dissemination.

This study exemplifies the ninth phase. It is of strategic importance to the organization given that Children Believe has identified advocacy and influence building in public policy for children as a key focus.

However, it is necessary to add to this sequence a phase 0, that of alertness, which constitutes a latent state of

receptivity to opportunities for advocacy.

The opportunities may present themselves in a variety of ways: the emergence of a specific theme in the public agenda, the formation of strategic alliances, the results obtained in certain programs or projects, the failure of a highly sensitive social policy, or other.

Children Believe has contributed to the establishment of bridges of communication between society and the government, in order to build an understanding of the needs and demands of Paraguay's girls, boys, and adolescents. It has maximized its impact by favouring the participation of a greater number of stakeholders, especially children and adolescents, and the articulation between civil society and the three levels of government.

Finally, it has generated communication processes with wide and deep content, improving the transparency of the initiatives implemented by Children Believe and its partners, and of the processes in which Children Believe is involved.

SUSTAINING AND EXPANDING THREE MAJOR ACHIEVEMENTS

1. *The signature of the 20 Commitments to Children by the presidential candidates for the 2018-2023 period of government and subsequent ratification by the elected and sitting president, Mario Abdo Benítez, with the meaningful participation of children and adolescents.*

For the next presidential election process the Front will count on a strong database and a set of indicators already incorporated within the database and webpage of the Ministry of Children and Adolescents. This will mean a strong starting point for this process.

The conversation of the Front with the technical group of the elected President, during the time prior to taking office, could now be centred on the reach of the commitments based on the information provided by the indicators.

2. *The promotion, consolidation, strengthening, and growth of the Front for the 2018-2023 period of government, especially with the incorporation of the National Children's Network and organizations that specialize in indigenous populations, early childhood, and children in boarding schools, among others.*

The Front will continue to grow by incorporating

"Our Paraguay team has been dynamic in undertaking this pioneering advocacy work in partnership with others in an enabling policy environment. The positive relationship the national government of Paraguay has with the civil society is something to be treasured as the government sees civil society as an important stakeholder and contributor in their nation building efforts. The ensued processes gave space for children's voices to be heard at the highest place of governance. Every step of the way the leadership from Children Believe and other key collaborators have resulted in the government signing the 20 commitments in favour of children and adolescents so that they may dream fearlessly; breaking barriers to education."

- Dr. Belinda Bennet, Chief International Programs Officer,
Children Believe

"This case study is an example of persistent advocacy efforts over the years yielding positive results in favour of children. The strength of collective leadership with like-minded organizations and the willingness on the part of the government to harness the potential of civil society to commit to the 20 Commitments are praiseworthy. The lessons inform us of the importance of strategic partnerships and technical capacity in addressing an existing gap. I am confident the 20 commitments, when fully achieved, will impact generations of Paraguayan children to realize their full potential. Paraguay will become a world leader in demonstrating its commitment to children. I wish them all success."

- Fred Witteveen, CEO,
Children Believe

organizations focused on topics in which it lacks expertise and representation, for example recreation and cultural and artistic activities; and by reaching out to strong civil society networks such as school parent associations and neighborhood commissions. It will promote the incorporation of non-governmental organizations from rural areas and work to achieve more constant and meaningful participation of children's organizations.

3. *The installation of a strategy and process, within the Ministry for Children and Adolescents, to monitor the 20 Commitments, incorporating more than 250 follow-up indicators and the meaningful participation of children and adolescents.*

This achievement needs to be consolidated along current government administration. It represents what is called the institutionalization of the 20 Commitments within the public sector. A crucial target in this matter is the strengthening of MINNA's Office for Strategic Information. This office plays a key and leading role in the monitoring and public dissemination of the 20 Commitments.

Strengthening and sustaining the monitoring strategy and process will require that the National Council for Children and Adolescents, and its members, play a more dynamic and dedicated role in the promotion of the 20 Commitments and furthering their compliance.

OVERCOMING CHALLENGES

The significant challenges faced in implementing the 20 Commitments are summarized below:

1. *A poor sense of ownership of the 20 Commitments by the public sector in general, and the limited availability of human, logistical, and financial resources of the Ministry for Children and Adolescents to effectively lead follow-up on compliance with the 20 Commitments to Children.*

Although the upgrading of the institution leading the children's sector within the Executive office, reaching the status of a Ministry, this did not mean an increase in budget for children. The internal arrangement made within limited resources helped to strengthen and expand its executive leadership position.

To overcome this limitation and strengthen the Ministry of Children and Adolescents in fulfilling its mission and to monitor the 20 Commitments, the Front is advocating for an important increase of the Ministry budget and the creation of an Investment Fund for Children. By participating in an inter-institutional working group led by the Ministry of Children and integrated by the Ministry of Finance, Children Believe and other local NGOs representing the Front would participate in this group.

Another way to overcome this challenge is if the Ministry of Children were to lead the monitoring of the 20 Commitments through the National Council of Children and Adolescents, which was the initial recommendation of the Front. This Council is comprised of the main public sector organizations from the Executive and Judiciary related to children's issues and is led by the Ministry of Children and Adolescents.

2. *The discontinuous, irregular, and less intense participation of children and adolescents through the National Children's Network, principally due to school responsibilities, lack of economic resources, or the logistics required for their mobility.*

This challenge can be met by strengthening the Child Participation Office at the Ministry of Children and Adolescents and the Child Participation Driving Group (of which Children Believe is a part) led by MINNA. This office and this driving group directly engage with children's organizations and provide them with training and support to increase and exert their participation capacities.

Children Believe identified in this challenge an opportunity to recommend to the Ministry of Children and Adolescents the need for a national policy and program on meaningful child participation. Both ideas are presently being explored by the Ministry of Children and Adolescents with the leading support of Children Believe.

3. *The limitations of time and resources of member and accompanying organizations of the Front assigned to technical or advocacy actions.*

Although a distribution of tasks and responsibilities, through the organization of several working groups, were implemented, members and accompanying organizations do not dedicate enough time to the Front due to their own busy workload. New organizational structures and functioning need to be considered.

CAPITALIZING ON KEY LEARNINGS

1. *The high potential for articulation between non-governmental organizations, children's organizations, and public sector agencies as a powerful tripod to sustain significant advocacy processes.*

The Front will continue on its path of growth by incorporating new organizations concerned with topics and areas of development which currently have low or zero representation within it. At the same time, the Front will continue to advocate for fortification of the Paraguay Ministry of Children and Adolescents, specifically in relation to its support for children's organizations.

To enrich the capacity and diversity of children's organizations within the National Network of Children and Adolescents, it is necessary to strengthen MINNA's Child Participation Office.

To increase the advocacy capacity of the Front, it needs to deepen its role within the National Council of Children and Adolescents and enhance relationships with member groups.

2. *The disparity in technical and statistical expertise among the Front's organizations to design and implement a follow-up system for the 20 Commitments.*

Funding is needed to train and strengthen members in statistics and in execution of their role to monitor and advocate for compliance of the commitments, and also to hire a consultant to consolidate the assessment of the government's annual report on progress towards achieving the 20 Commitments.

3. *The willingness and ability of children and adolescents to get involved and learn the technical and statistical aspects of followup in advocacy processes.*

This willingness and ability are solid bases upon which to build a higher quality and level of participation of organized children. More resources assigned by the Ministry of Children and Adolescents to its Child Participation Office, a strengthened Child Participation Driving Group and a national policy on child participation will significantly contribute to boosting child participation within and beyond the Front.



A REDNNA representative shares his analysis with the Minister of Children and Adolescents during an annual public accountability event held in August 2019.

SUSTAINING THE MOMENTUM

The 20 Commitments process, formalized within the Paraguay government structure from 2017 to 2019, has not ended. The current 20 Commitments to Children are in force. Children Believe continues to co-coordinate the work of the Front, to promote and monitor compliance with the 20 Commitments.

Above all, Children Believe and its partner organizations continue to drive forward their commitment to Paraguay's children and adolescents, with the vision that every Paraguayan girl and boy has access to education, can realize their fundamental human rights, and be a voice for positive change in their own community.

The success achieved by Children Believe in advocating for children and adolescents, as seen in this and other cases presented in this series, encourages the organization to deepen its participation in the Front and continue to encourage compliance with the 20 Commitments assumed by the president of the Republic.

To this end, Children Believe Paraguay and its partner

organizations –Fundación Alda, Global Infancia, and Crecer– have decided to intensify their actions on the issues of child participation and advocacy. They have embarked on a journey to consolidate as a Centre of Excellence for Child Participation and Protection.

The 20 Commitments is a huge civil society advocacy driven practice that includes the active participation of organized children. It was already assumed by two consecutive Presidents of the Nation and Executive Administrations. In each presidential period it reached a significant level of development.

The first effort (2013-2018) helped to formally institutionalize the 20 Commitments within the government structure. The second (2018-2023) saw a substantial improvement in the way the commitments were organized and translated into specific indicators, and in the design of a monitoring tool to measure and assess the level of compliance with the commitments.

Having prioritized influence as one of the main priorities of its strategic plan, Children Believe will keep supporting, consolidating and improving this effort in the country. The organization's leading role within the Front remains



Encouraging children and youth to advocate on issues of relevance to them is a key component of the work of Children Believe and the Front in the second presidential phase (2018-2023).

important, at least in the short term.

Enhancing the profile of Children Believe in Paraguay as a Centre of Excellence for Child Protection and Participation, and the global organizational mandate for improved access to quality education, will help to deepen advances made.

On one hand, two of the 20 Commitments refer specifically to protecting children from violence and child participation. Both topics constitute pathways to achieving greater social impact through Children Believe’s global strategy. With close cooperation between Children Believe and the National Network of Children and Adolescents there is a significant opportunity to make substantial advancements in these two areas. As previously stated, the Network took on the task of monitoring both commitments.

On the other hand, universal access to quality education is one of the most critical, challenging and ambitious commitments of the 20. The Front is comprised of several networks: NGOs specialized in education, national student associations and NGOs specialized in promoting child rights. These are strong assets for advocating on improved access to quality education.

The Front now has two big opportunities to institutionalize the 20 Commitments. One, through deeper and more explicit incorporation of them and their indicators into all public sector agendas and plans; and two, through more systemic involvement of sector organizations into the monitoring effort.

The success of the 20 Commitments is also a motivation

for Children Believe and the Front for Children and Adolescents, to expand this process within the country at other levels of governance. The fact that this practice was already partially replicated in some local governments, shows its potential for viable expansion.

It is also motivation for Children Believe and the Front to take the 20 Commitments to an international level. First, through the Advocacy Task Force of the ChildFund Alliance, in which Children Believe participates actively, and the Joining Forces¹² initiatives.

Second, at the regional level (The Americas and the Caribbean) through the strong relationship of Children Believe and other members of the Front with the Inter-American Children’s Institute (IIN) and the Global Movement for Children of Latin America and the Caribbean (MMI-LAC).

Third, at the sub-regional level (South America) through the Common South Market (Mercosur), thanks to the positioning of Children Believe and other Front members with the Ministry of Children and Adolescents and the Niño/ Niña Sur (South Child) working group of MERCOSUR.

With greater institutionalized commitment, indicators and monitoring, the Front will be able to expand its advocacy to incorporate more crucial topics in the national agenda. Among these: budget increases and the creation of an investment fund for children and adolescents; strengthening the Ministry of Children and Adolescents; fortifying the National System of Promotion and Comprehensive Protection of Children’s Rights; consolidating monitoring of the 20 Commitments; and bolstering education and health systems.

¹² Joining Forces is a coalition of the biggest child-focused non-governmental international organizations integrated by Save the Children International, World Vision International, ChildFund Alliance, Plan International, SOS Children’s Villages International and Terre des Hommes International Federation.

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Children Believe works globally to empower children to dream fearlessly, stand up for what they believe in – and be heard. For 60+ years, we've brought together brave young dreamers, caring supporters and partners, and unabashed idealists. Together, we're driven by a common belief: creating access to education – inside and outside of classrooms – is the most powerful tool children can use to change their world.

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