

DIRECT MUNICIPAL INVESTMENT IN CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS -PREMISES AND EXAMPLES- NICARAGUA

**Pedro Hurtado Vega
Managua, April 2006**

**Updating: September 2009 with inputs of
Janet Castillo and Ricardo Páramo**

Introduction

Studies and research of the United Nations have stated in a clear way the existing relation between education and health received by a person in her/his childhood, adolescence and youth and his/her potential, future capacity to generate incomes, possibilities of having a healthy and productive life, to establish a family, contribute to society, etc.

Agencies and organizations such as UNICEF and Save the Children as well as others, have also pointed out the relevance of factors such as respect and caring relations towards the integral development of people, and especially girls, boys and adolescents.

The development of people, as well as a country's development, is consubstantial to the respect and validity of human rights: the right to education, the right to health, the right to a name and a nationality, the right to participation, the right to be treated with respect and dignity, just to mention a few of the rights that are fundamental rights.

This takes us to understand that national and municipal development implies the fulfillment of human rights and in particular of those that are specific to children and adolescents rights. But development has a cost. And without investment there is no development. Said in another way, investing in children and adolescents encourages municipal and national development, in such a way that the investment in children is an effective way to fulfill their rights.

Within families, one of the best investments adults can do is the example we provide, along with the time we dedicate and the respect and love we give our children.

For state institutions, and especially for municipal governments, the direct investment in children and adolescents means the allocation of resources, the execution of projects, works and actions, also, decision making that has a positive impact on the exercising and enjoying rights of children and adolescents. The aim of direct investment in children and adolescents is their well being, their own development, their happiness.

Premises

The Nicaraguan experience has taught us that direct investment in children and adolescents involves some basic premises, from which we all learn every day.

- National and municipal development means the fulfillment of human rights and in particular those that are specific to children and adolescents. There is no development without investment.
- Willingness of a municipal government to invest in children and adolescents must be expressed in an explicit way through policies, strategies, projects and budgets at short, medium and long terms.
- Children and adolescents must be actors, and not simple and passive beneficiaries of direct investment; their opinion must be taken into account. Otherwise, a park will be built where it is not required, or maybe what children would need is the expansion of their school.
- Investment in children comprises investment, meaning economical resources, but also includes willingness translated into actions to support other actors, the generation of participation and consultation spaces, the development of adequate conditions for the **holistic** development of children and adolescents.
- Direct investment in children and adolescents includes in general support on supplies and physical resources, economic and human resources provided by municipalities based in the functioning, promotion, exercise and fulfillment of the rights of children and adolescents.
- Resources for economic investment can be derived from the current revenues as well as from those originated by transferences and projects of the central government, or funds and projects provided by international cooperation.
- Direct investment in children and adolescents is when the central motivation or main reason of such investment is children and adolescents. Or, when they are an important beneficiary of it.

Although it is true that works addressed to population in general, for example, the paving of a street used by everyone, or the installation of street lighting in a main road contribute to improve the life quality of population in general, including children and adolescents, it should not be unseen that is also required to take actions on their specific needs. That is direct investment.

Direct municipal investment in children and adolescents constitutes an investment that includes economical resources, materials or human resources provided by the municipalities, nevertheless, also includes the willingness translated into actions of support, creating spaces for participation and consultation, creation of suitable conditions for their **holistic** development. It is direct investment in children and adolescents when they are the central motivation or most important reason for such investment, or when the direct beneficiaries of it are girls, boys and adolescents.

Some examples of direct investment in children and adolescents

A list of different possibilities or actions for direct municipal investment in children and adolescents has risen from the experience of the Network of Municipal Governments

Friends of Children and Adolescents (it used to be denominated as Network of Majors) and Municipal Commissions of Children and Adolescents (CMNA), in coordination with the contribution of organizations, institutions and cooperation agencies. Although it is not a conclusive list, it covers a good portion of transcendent examples to develop a quality investment in children and adolescents.

A) On the right to education:

- Building, repairing or expansion of schools and preschools spaces.
- Building and repairing paths or roads, streets, bridges, sidewalks, pavements or ramps that children would use to go to school.
- Donations of land to build schools.
- Scholarships to children
- Acquisition of school supplies, uniforms and backpacks.
- Equipment for schools, technical centers and preschools, including school libraries (for example: whiteboards, didactic materials, furniture).
- Contribution to salaries for teachers and other types of subsidies.
- Economic support to schools, technical centers and preschools.
- Economic and logistic support to literacy initiatives.
- Awards and recognition to schools, teachers and students.
- Support to public campaigns on the right to free and good quality education (perifoneo, adds on blanquettes, vignettes on radio, etc.)

B) On the right to recreation and culture:

- Building, repairing, expansion and maintenance of playgrounds, sport fields, and children and adolescent's houses for meeting.
- Building, repairing and maintenance of libraries.
- Building, repairing and maintenance of paths, streets, sidewalks, pavements or ramps or ramps that children would use to have access to playgrounds, libraries or places they usually go to.
- Equipment for parks.
- Equipment for public or community libraries.
- Acquisition of library and playful materials for public or community libraries.
- Acquisition of sport goods for children and adolescents.
- Contribution to salaries for libraries personnel and other type of subsidies.
- Economical support, materials and equipment to folkloric and cultural groups and sport equipment.
- Organization of movie presentations in parks, Cultural Centre, or recreation centers.
- Organization and support to cultural and educational fairs.
- Organization and support to sport leagues.

C) On the right to health, nutrition and a healthy environment:

- Building, repairing or expansion of maternal houses, health centers, and spaces for children to eat (kitchen for children).

- Economical and logistical support to vaccination journeys, fumigation, medical brigades, and health brigadiers.
- Economical and logistical support and provision of medication to girls and boys who have health problems.
- Installation of potable water systems, toilets and wastewater in schools, playgrounds, libraries and other places where children and adolescents usually go.
- Educative campaigns and cleaning of places used by girls, boys and adolescents.
- Donation of trees to schools and tree planting in places that girls, boys and adolescents usually go.
- Awards and recognition to the most forested and clean schools.

D) On the right to a name and a nationality:

- Exemption of birth certificates cost.
- Economical support for repositioning of birth certificates.
- Economical support to people connected to birth registration offices.
- Performance of mobile birth registration addressed to communities.
- Public campaigns on the right to a name and a nationality (perifoneo, blanquettes with ads, vignettes on the radio, etc).
- Awards and recognitions to communities with a high percentage of birth registration.
- Coordination with institutions, courts, NGOs, CMNA and CDM.

E) On the right to the participation:

- Economical and logistical support for the development of children councils and other forms of consultation, with the aim of listening and taking into account the proposals and opinions of children and adolescents.
- Economical and logistical support for the establishment and functioning of municipal councils of girls, boys and adolescents, and other expressions of children and adolescents organizations.
- Children and adolescents participate in consensus roundtables and GPC of their municipality.
- Coordination with CMNA and NGOs.

F) On citizenship safety and the right of living without violence:

- Installation of fences in educative centers where is required for children safety.
- Installation of lights and surveillance in playgrounds, access roads to evening schools, and locations frequented or visited by children and adolescents.
- Public campaigns on the right of children to live without violence (perifoneo, blanquettes with ads, vignettes on the radio, etc.)
- Social integration measures for adolescents in risk.

- Support to initiatives of children and adolescents on coexistence and citizen safety.
 - Municipal ordinances, resolutions and agreements prohibiting the sale of liquor, toxics (drugs), and tobacco to minors under 18 years old, and on the location of bars, slot machines and casinos close to schools, playgrounds and parks.
 - Coordination with relevant institutions, NGOs and CMNA.
- G) On the right to social integration of children and adolescents with disabilities:
- Building of access roads (ramps), in sidewalks, playgrounds and parks, schools, libraries and even the Mayor's office.
 - Economical and logistical support to organizations and centers dedicated to children and adolescents with disabilities.
 - Supporting social integration measures of girls, boys and adolescents with disabilities.
 - Support public campaigns on the no-discrimination and the social integration of children and adolescents with disabilities (perifoneo, blanquettes with ads, vignettes on the radio, etc.).
 - Coordination with relevant institutions and organizations.
- H) On the knowledge of children and adolescents situation:
- Economical and logistical support in the performing and promotion of diagnostics on children and adolescents situation, and the implementation status of their rights.
- I) On child labor, sexual and commercial exploitation and trafficking of people:
- Definition of aims and concrete actions of prevention, protection and eradication of the worse forms of child labor, sexual and commercial exploitation of children and adolescents, and trafficking of people.
 - Fines, sanctions and closure of centers exploiters of girls, boys and adolescents.
 - Public campaigns on the above subjects (perifoneo, blanquettes with ads, vignettes on the radio, etc.)
 - Coordination with relevant institutions and organizations.
- J) On the Municipal Commissions of Children and Adolescents (CMNA):
- Economical, material and logistical support to CMNA.
 - Provision of a location, donation of land and/or building or repairing of building for the CMNA, or Center for Children and Adolescents.
 - Designation of a delegate before the CMNA.
 - Municipal ordinance or agreement recognizing and supporting the CMNAs.
 - Continuity of support to the CMNA in the next period of municipal government.
 - Support the participation of the CMNA in the Municipal Development Committee, Citizen Power Organization or other similar bodies.

K) On the situations of disasters:

- Promotion and praxis of prevention measures for disasters situations that might affect children and adolescents.
- Organization and support in the performing of integral protection measures to children and adolescents in disaster situations.
- Taking the right approach on the rights of children in risk prevention.
- Coordination with relevant institutions and organizations.

L) On adolescents offenders:

- Offer of proposal for adolescents offenders provide community services with a socio-educative aim (in playgrounds and parks, greenhouses, and other public facilities.)
- Coordination with relevant courts, institutions and organizations.

M) On the visibility of children in plans:

- Subjects related to children and adolescent are explicitly stated in the municipal government plans by the means of programs, projects, goals, results, aims, etc.
- Children and adolescents are prioritized sectors in the performing of projects for the municipality.
- Having specific programs for children.
- Designation of a council and/or technician to assist the Children theme.

It would be ideal that municipal governments and the CMNAs would be able to use the above examples of actions, as a checklist of their own actions of investment and, furthermore, be able to value the importance and scope of their commitment in the accomplishment of the rights of children.

Registering of information

The majority of municipal governments still have incomplete registrations of data. It is necessary that at the moment of working on plans, some key aspects should be seen to do a greater impact of the actions and, therefore, in their conclusion, information should be registered according to what is planned. It is always of importance to be precise on: origin of funding, to whom and how many the investment is addressed to (the more specific, the better it is.), and what is the right that is being worked on.

When the information on municipal investment is registered, it is convenient to establish and analyze the following information crossing, for the use of posterior decision making of the municipal government:

- a) The proportion that represents the economic investment versus the investment or general expenses,
- b) The proportion between the investment with own funds of the municipal government and the funds supplied by transferences or other sources,

- c) The proportion of girls, boys and adolescents among the direct beneficiaries and their total population
- d) The proportion of investment in function of each right,
- e) The relation between the investment in the urban area and the rural sector.

Final message

I finish the same way I started. The goal of investment in children and adolescents is their wellbeing. National and municipal development must go through the accomplishment of human rights, and in particular, those rights that are specific to children and adolescents. But development has a cost, and there is no development without investment.

We need to invest in children!