



Save the Children

**EVALUATION OF THE IMPACT OF COOPERATION
BETWEEN SAVE THE CHILDREN AND THE CENTRAL
AMERICAN UNIVERSITY (UCA) OF NICARAGUA
2000-2018**

November 2018

CREDITS

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PRESENTATION

The cooperative relations between Save the Children and the Central American University (UCA) have been in existence for 18 years. In this period of time, UCA has taken significant steps to incorporate the Rights of the Child approach into its curricula and institutional practice.

The Nicaraguan society as a whole has been strengthened with the training of 400 professionals specialized in Children's Rights and who work in civil society organizations, State institutions and the media. In 2016, Save the Children also supported the preparation and publication of the Child Protection Policy of the UCA, thus becoming the first higher education institution in the country to have it.

The UCA is the leading Nicaraguan and Central American university in the educational offer related to children's rights. It also has experience of participation in national and regional networks related to children's rights.

This publication documents the evaluation of the impact of the cooperation between Save the Children and UCA from the year 2000 to the present, describes its evolution, achievements, limitations and conclusions. For this, it required an exhaustive documentary review and interviews with participants in academic programs, teachers and staff of both parties. In these 18 years, Save the Children Norway with funds from the Norwegian Agency for Development was the one who provided uninterrupted support.

We hope that this experience can be known in the 120 countries where Save the Children has a presence and that globally stimulate new initiatives of cooperation with the academic sector.

Without any doubt children win.

Oslo and Managua, November 2018.

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CONTENIDO

INTRODUCTION	6
• The cooperation between Save the Children and the UCA in numbers	7
COMMUNICATION AND CHILD RIGHTS	9
• The Communication and Child Rights academic program	10
• The program's importance over its 12 years of implementation	10
• The program's impact on its participants' personal and professional lives	11
• Possible scenarios had this program not been implemented	12
• A code of ethics for journalism on child-related issues	12
• Adjustment of the study plan for the program's eighth edition	13
• The emergence of a new Communication and Child Rights course	13
MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAM IN SOCIAL POLICIES AND CHILD AND ADOLESCENT RIGHTS AND PROTAGONISM	14
• The master's degree program and its academic development	15
• Research topics that are still relevant	15
• The master's degree program and its impact on its students' lives	16
• The master's degree program as a dynamic experience of the UCA	17
• Academic offer ads supported by Save the Children	18
• From master's degree to specialization	19
CHILD AND ADOLESCENT PROTECTION POLICY AND REGULATIONS	20
• The process of producing the policy	21
CHILD RIGHTS ALLIANCES	23
• Student internships as a sphere of cooperation	24
OTHER IMPORTANT INITIATIVES	24
• Project linked to the education area (IDEUCA)	24
• Education and training on Communication and Health with an Emphasis on HIV/ AIDS	24
• Professional updating on journalistic coverage of human trafficking cases	25
CONCLUSIONS	26
SOURCES OF INFORMATION	27

INTRODUCTION

Save the Children has had an uninterrupted presence in Nicaragua since 1986, during which time it has developed different activities in favor of children's rights. One aspect that has stood out is a number of experiences linked to education and training on child rights-related issues that have been implemented in conjunction with the Central American University (UCA) over the last 18 years.

The impact of this effort has reached beyond the number of students that have participated in the different academic programs involved, as it has also changed the lives of the students that received the training and education. One student, Sara López, sums up her personal and professional changes in the following way:

"I've taken on child rights as a lifestyle that touches upon all my dimensions as a woman, mother, daughter, friend, teacher, neighbor, counsellor, grandmother... and I won't stop highlighting this in every instant of my life, because I believe that the way to do justice is by recognizing, applying and defending these rights."

This document assesses the impact of the cooperation between the UCA and Save the Children from the year 2000 to May 2018.

The following main areas were defined for the research study:

- The education and training of specialized professionals through different modalities: master's degree, specializations, diploma courses.
- The UCA's institutional capacity building, which includes incorporating a child-rights focus into the curriculum and the approval of a child and adolescent protection policy.
- Participation in spaces and the establishment for alliances with civil society organizations working on child rights-related issues.

The work methodology corresponded to a descriptive research study involving in-depth interviews with key informants, including 10% of the students that participated in the different education and training programs. It also included a documentary review of information generated throughout this cooperation process.

In July 2018, the coordinating body for NGOs working with children and adolescents (CODENI) published a report stating that Nicaragua had been going through an unprecedented socio-political crisis since April 18 of that year. At the time the report was released, the crisis had resulted in the violent deaths of 28 children between the ages of 5 months and 17 years.

More than five months after breaking out, the crisis is still unresolved and—while not the object of this particular study—the reality of the situation has been present throughout the research process. The conversations held with the main sources of information and with the group of students from the different training programs were marked by the context of the country's socio-political crisis.

The cooperation between Save the Children and the UCA in numbers

The different documents signed as part of the cooperation framework between the two institutions established the following as the basis and purpose of the cooperation:

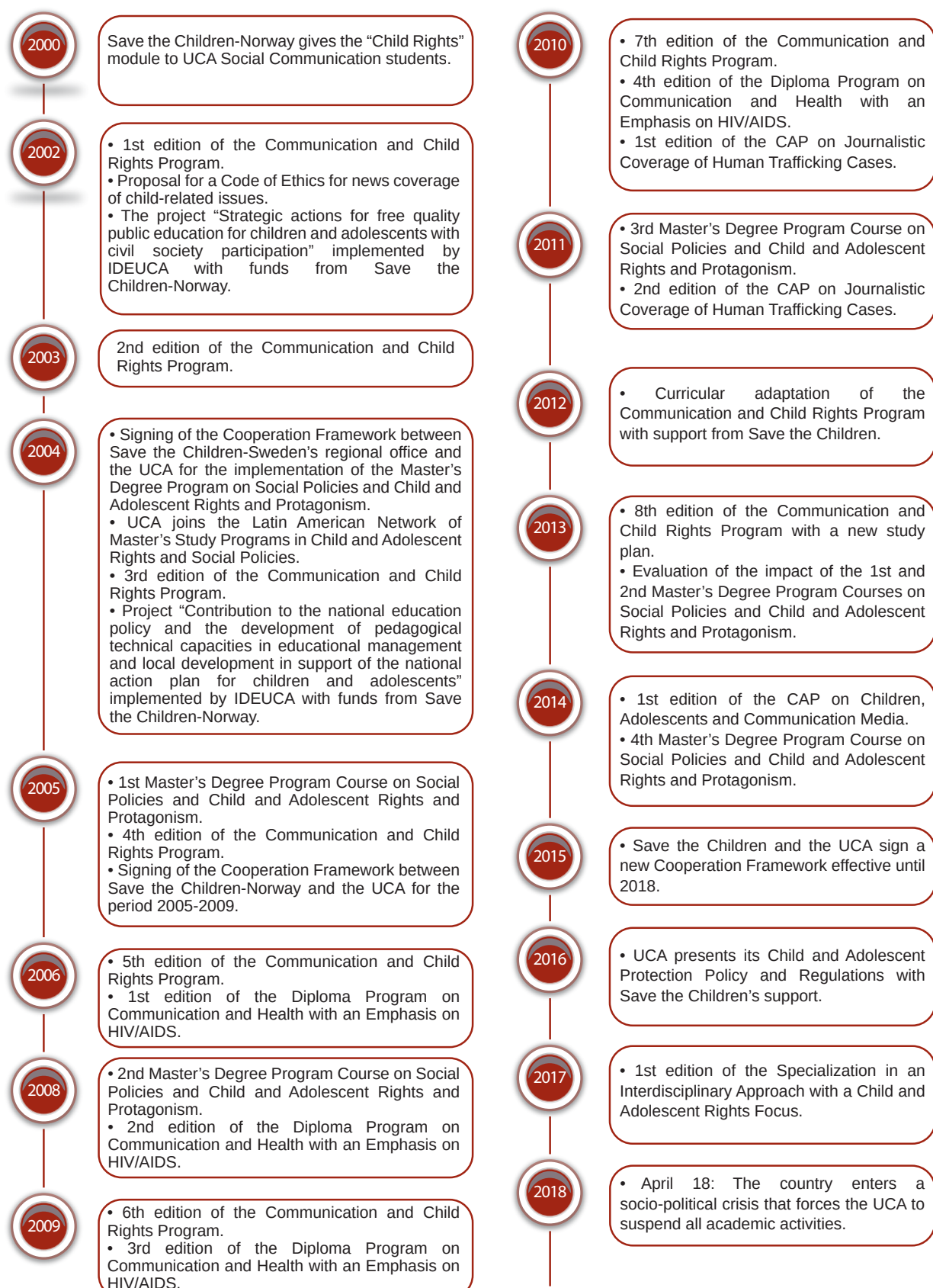
“The cooperation between the UCA and Save the Children is based on a shared vision of the human being and most particularly of children as full social and rights-bearing subjects. It is based on respect, transparency, the exchange of information, mutual learning and open and critical dialogue.”¹

With this purpose and through the processes that took place at different moments and with different projects, the following can be highlighted:

- The implementation of 8 editions of an education and training program on Communication and Child Rights, which trained and educated 264 professionals on this issue.
- The holding of 4 master's degree program courses on Social Policies and Child Rights that trained and educated 60 professionals who graduated with a master's degree (involving two years of studies) and 3 who graduated as specialists (involving one year of studies).
- A specialization program on an Interdisciplinary Approach with a Child Rights Focus, which trained 25 people.
- The implementation of a Professional Updating Course (CAP) on Children, Adolescents and Communication Media, which trained 20 professionals above all from the fields of journalism and communications.
- The production of a Child and Adolescent Protection Policy and Regulations that the UCA prepared for implementation within the institution.
- The UCA's participation in different civil society alliances with the aim of advocating for child rights.
- Finally, other initiatives that Save the Children supported at different moments also stand out, including:
 - Education projects with the UCA's Education Institute (IDEUCA).
 - Two Professional Updating Courses (CAPs) on Journalistic Coverage of Human Trafficking Cases, which educated and trained 50 professionals linked to communication and journalism.
 - Four editions of a Diploma Course on Communication and Health with an Emphasis on HIV/AIDS, a program organized by the UCA, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and Save the Children.

1 Fundamentals and purpose of cooperation. Section 3.1 Cooperation Framework UCA and Save the Children.

The following graphic is a chronological summary of the main achievements obtained by Save the Children and the UCA during this time



COMMUNICATION AND CHILD RIGHTS

The initial conversations between Save the Children-Norway and the Central American University were established during the first third of the year 2000. These talks involved Save the Children-Norway's Ramón Meneses, who was head of the communication area, and Guillermo Rothschuh, dean of the Communication Sciences Faculty at the UCA.

The UCA was the main reference point in the area of university-level studies in the field of communication and journalism and had also developed certain initiatives related to communication and children. For Meneses, the aim of approaching the UCA was to encourage it to become involved in educating and training journalists on the topic of child rights.

Luz María Sequeira, who was Save the Children-Norway's interim representative in Nicaragua at the time, explained that they wanted to take the training experience the organization was already developing to a university education and training level.

The first experience achieved during that year was the training of first-year social communication students on issues related to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and Nicaragua's recently-approved Legal Code for Children and Adolescents. Save the Children-Norway designated Meneses and Pedro Hurtado Vega to give the training and Hurtado Vega would subsequently be responsible for the cooperation relationship with the UCA. Both officials would play key roles in developing all of the cooperation with the UCA.

This experience was replicated the following year and represented an innovation in the university's social communication study plan. It was also the starting point for subsequently offering a more complete academic program on communication and child rights.



Graduation VIII Higher Diploma in Communication and Children Rights

The Communication and Child Rights academic program

The process initiated with the formulation of a study plan that involved other institutions such as the Office of Human Rights Ombudsperson and Centro Dos Generaciones, in addition to the UCA and Save the Children-Norway. The participating organizations agreed on a study plan for the program, which was called the “Postgraduate Course on Communication and Child Rights” for its first five editions and then changed to a “Diploma Course” for editions six to eight.

Xochilt Gutiérrez, who was the coordinator of the first three editions, recognized that the plan was produced as a result of the synergy among all of the parties involved, as well as Save the Children-Norway’s timely and appropriate advice.

The program’s importance over its 12 years of implementation

The education program on Communication and Child Rights trained 264 students during its eight different editions between 2002 and 2013. Although the profile for potential students was mainly journalists and communicators from communication media, all of the curricula² devised for this program always provided the option of accepting professionals from other fields working in public institutions or civil society organizations.

The working environment of those who completed the program’s different editions was: 46% from civil society; 37% from communication media; and 17% from public institutions.

The number of participants in each of the program’s editions was as follows:

EDITION: NUMBER AND YEAR		TOTAL PARTICIPANTS
Edition 1	(2002)	37
Edition 2	(2003)	38
Edition 3	(2004)	37
Edition 4	(2005)	38
Edition 5	(2006)	32
Edition 6	(2009)	29
Edition 7	(2010)	33
Edition 8	(2013)	20

The scholarship fund for the first edition was fully covered by Save the Children-Norway, although UNICEF and Plan International made significant contributions to these funds in subsequent editions.

² As established in the entry profiles in the curricular designs for this academic program.

The program's impact on its participants' personal and professional lives

A total of 10% of those who successfully completed the eight courses were consulted to obtain their perceptions of the impact this academic program had on their personal and professional lives and its importance in their work.

All of the people consulted agreed that the learning acquired during the process of education and training in the area of child rights had had an impact on both their personal and professional lives. Some mentioned how they apply their knowledge in the family sphere and how they have fought in their work spaces to ensure that children's rights are respected.

Generally speaking, those consulted are aware that behavioral changes are not just the result of theoretical knowledge, but rather gradually develop in everyday life and that the process involves knocking down culturally established myths and paradigms.

They had different reasons for involving themselves in the course, including "improving the way child-related issues are addressed in the news", "wanting to be an agent of change", "having a better knowledge of the legal framework with respect to children" and "understanding the context of children in Nicaragua." Others said that they were working on children's projects but had no academic education or training in the field and the program provided the right opportunity to obtain it.

Kenia Sánchez, who completed the program's sixth edition, said that her main motivation was to strengthen her theoretical and legal foundations in order to promote, protect and defend the rights of Nicaraguan children.

In relation to changes in everyday actions, some stated that they practiced what they had learned almost immediately. Heyzel Garay, who attended the first edition of the course, was a television reporter at the time and said that she stopped using images of children and started to conceal their faces so as not to reveal their identities on the news. She also mentioned that she acquired an increased interest in covering child-related events.

Television journalist Claudia Rivas, who completed the program's second edition, declared herself to be a volunteer child defender. She said that in her daily work she tries to guide other colleagues when she feels child-related issues are being covered in the wrong way.

Jossie Soto successfully completed the second edition. She explained that she grew up in a family with a patriarchal culture in which her father and grandfather were "the family's supreme authority" and that there was no democracy in her home. "As a girl, I couldn't want or choose anything," she said. "Nor could I question the decisions made by the heads of the household." This existential condition was her main motivation for taking the course: "I wanted to contribute to the defense and full enjoyment of children's rights."

Nelson Rodríguez, a journalist from Radio Universidad, finished the first edition of the program's course. He recognized that prior to the course the journalist profession hardly ever addressed child-related issues and if it did this generally involved revictimizing the children. For Rodríguez, "children were talked about projecting them as victims, without addressing the social problems behind those conditions in any depth."

Generally, most of those consulted felt that the academic education and training had contributed to an important social change in the country running from the personal sphere to the institutional one. They considered that while such academic programs are not enough in themselves, their absence would have meant it was impossible to achieve these changes or that they would have happened more slowly through other efforts or spaces outside of the academic sphere.

They also stated that the changes achieved can be seen both in the work of the media and in the different organizations and institutions. The communication media have seen changes with respect to the treatment of news contents, which in turn affect the audiences given the media's power in terms of influencing society. And the people consulted also believe there has been a substantial improvement in the management and advocacy work of institutions working on child-related issues.

Possible scenarios had this program not been implemented

People who finished the academic program described various levels and perspectives in relation to how things would have been had it not been implemented. But their descriptions of such a scenario also had their particularities.

For Oscar Álvarez, who studied in the fourth edition, “We would be facing a scenario that is stigmatizing for children, projected from the communication media and from other work spaces.” He also warned that “We would be less assertive; we’d have made more mistakes.”

Inés Molina, who also completed the fourth edition, felt that without these training and education efforts society would not recognize the importance of children playing a leading role and their right to decide. There would not be so much collective awareness and there would be less cohesion among the different social groups working on the issues of human rights in general and children's rights in particular.

Jade Cano, who finished the third edition, believed that had these processes not taken place, the rights of children who suffer violence or have disabilities or illnesses such as HIV would be less protected and they would be more negatively exposed in the media.

A code of ethics for journalism on child-related issues

A proposed “code of ethics for news coverage of child-related issues” emerged as a result of the first editions of the academic program on Communication and Child Rights. This was drawn up by the participants of the first course and improved during the second and third editions.

This initiative aimed at producing the first journalist Code of Ethics on the issue of children in Nicaragua was consulted with more than 450 people in Managua, León, Granada and Estelí. Those consulted included journalists, camerapeople, photographers, journalism students and adolescent communicators. However, the initiative needed to be followed up and updated and it ended up being sidelined. The Code was not officially taken on by the country's different journalist associations or by the main media.

Jorge Mendoza, executive director of Foro de Educación y Desarrollo Humano, was involved in the training and education processes as a teacher and witnessed how this Code was drawn up. Mendoza described the initiative as having a significant impact and being a milestone in journalism because many journalists that took the course also internalized the Code as a reference point in their communication work.

Adjustment of the study plan for the program's eighth edition

At the end of the program's seventh edition, Save the Children and the UCA agreed to adjust the study plan with the aim of adapting it to the new circumstances of Nicaraguan society at that time. One of the new study contents was the analysis of information in the digital environment.

The author of this report, who has also held the post of head of the UCA's Department of Communication Sciences, identified the urgent need to include the digital issue in the program's study plan, given the context generated by the different social networks in the country.

Other contents included in the new study plan for the eighth edition were the Family Code and media approaches with a gender perspective.

The emergence of a new Communication and Child Rights course

Following the eighth edition of the diploma course, Save the Children was the only funder of the study scholarships, meaning that the program could not continue as a diploma course and therefore had to be suspended.

Geraldine Withford, who was the coordinator of the eighth edition of this academic program, explained that they explored the idea of those interested taking the course with a reduced scholarship fund. However, the results were not satisfactory and, although they showed an interest in the program, possible students for a ninth edition turned down the idea of taking it if they had to partially or fully cover the enrolment costs.

With the aim of continuing the academic training and education, but with fewer resources, Save the Children and the UCA agreed to produce a Professional Updating Course (CAP)³ that covered the main issues in order to maintain the central objective of teaching communication and child rights, but with a reduced time scale. As a result, the CAP on Children, Adolescents and Communication Media was organized in 2014 with 20 participants.

Walkiria Chavarría, who is a journalist at a television channel, said that she took the CAP because she felt she needed greater knowledge to improve her coverage of child-related issues. She stated that the course provided her with a much broader vision of the subject, which allowed her to produce more professional work.

"I personally feel more empowered in relation to these issues and try to be consistent with what I learned in my day-to-day life, at home, in my environment, and in my interpersonal relations," she reflected.

³ In the UCA, courses with fewer than 100 study hours are called Cursos de Actualización Profesional, or Professional Updating Courses (CAPs)..

MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAM IN SOCIAL POLICIES AND CHILD AND ADOLESCENT RIGHTS AND PROTAGONISM

The former dean of the Humanities Faculty, Donald Méndez Quintana, identified a Latin American tendency that started in Peru with an interest in recognizing the leading role played by working children. In his opinion, this was a starting point for what would subsequently become the UCA's Master's Degree Program in Social Policies and Child and Adolescent Rights and Protagonism.

This academic program initially had financial and technical backing from the Save the Children-Sweden's regional office for Latin America and the Caribbean in Lima and was also supported by Save the Children-Norway's Nicaragua office, which assumed the full weight of the cooperation following this first experience.

For Méndez, the master's degree program allowed the university to become a reference point in the area of professional education and training with the aim of generating thinking and knowledge around the leading role of children, particularly those at the grass-roots level.

The first course started in 2005, following a collective consensus-building process to produce a study plan. This process involved the participation not only of UCA academics, but also representatives from other national organizations with experience working with children. The drawing up of this study plan also involved collaboration from the Latin American Network of Master's Study Programs in Child and Adolescent Rights and Social Policies, made up of various Latin American universities and which the UCA subsequently joined.



Students of the 2nd edition of masters

This Latin American Network allowed the UCA to receive methodological advice and bibliographical resources and to organize an international seminar. For Martha Trujillo, the master's degree program's first academic coordinator, the organization of this seminar not only marked the initiation of the education and training program, but also helped to establish the situation of children as a subject of national academic debate and to place it on the agenda of Nicaraguan public opinion.

According to Trujillo, the master's degree program was an unprecedented academic occurrence in Nicaragua and the region and it motivated Guatemala's Rafael Landívar University to organize a similar program, for which it received advice from the UCA.

The master's degree program and its academic development

Four master's degree program courses were held between 2005 and 2016. As part of the degree's methodology, students could opt for a specialization in Child and Adolescent Rights after the first year of study if they so desired. As a result, at the time of writing this report a total of 60 students had obtained the title of master and 3 had obtained the title of specialist. A total of 67% of the students who started this academic program successfully concluded it and the percentage should be even higher once the students present their end-of-course assignments in the coming months.

RESULTS OF THE FOUR MASTER'S DEGREE PROGRAM COURSES		
IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD	GRADUATED WITH A MASTER'S DEGREE	GRADUATED WITH A SPECIALIZATION
Course I – 2005-2007	20	2
Course II – 2009-2011	17	
Course III – 2011-2013	15	
Course IV – 2014-2016	7	1
Total	60	3

Produced by the author.

With respect to the working environment these graduated students came from, it can be seen that the UCA and Save the Children made an effort to encourage the involvement of public sector officials in this master's degree program, although there was still always a greater number of people from civil society compared to government institutions. The data show that 77% of graduated students worked for civil society bodies, while 33% were public officials.

The 42 end-of-course research studies that have been completed to date were on the following topics: education, child protagonism, public policies, child labor, migration, violence, communication media and the legal framework. A total of 23% of these theses were related to education, thus contributing to the university's declared education-related research line.

Priest Julio C. Sosa, who was the UCA's first dean of the Humanities and Communication Faculty, also commented on the above-mentioned finding about the main research topics generated during the master's degree program. He believes that as a result of all of this cooperation experience, the UCA could in the future promote an observatory to research and propose new initiatives in the educational sphere that promote "children as rights-bearing subjects."

Research topics that are still relevant

The nature and methodology of this master's degree program mean that the end-of-course assignment topics are not just academic documents; they are also proposals that can be analyzed and debated in certain spaces of society.

Evelyn Pinto Centeno, who graduated from the first master's degree program course, wrote a scientific article on the primary student population's right to voice an opinion on the school's educational process. Pinto considers that despite the time that has passed, her topic is still relevant and can continue generating opinions with a view to achieving changes that favor children.

During this study it was possible to verify that several of these research works have been shared in academic arenas, such as the Central American University's Research Congress. However, there is still a need to promote the dissemination of the research carried out during the different master's degree program courses, as well as their use for social advocacy.

The impact evaluation the UCA conducted of the first two courses in 2013 had already identified the need to disseminate these research studies even more, which for Pedro Hurtado Vega is an ongoing task for this kind of postgraduate program.

The master's degree program and its impact on its students' lives

For Marta Trujillo, the fact that 11% of the total people who successfully completed the master's degree program were male demonstrates the interest that this subject has awoken among this population group. She felt that the reality in Nicaragua tends to suggest "that child-related issues are mainly a priority for women."

Denis Gaitán was one of the male graduates of the master's degree course. He considered that this education and training program profoundly changed him as a person. Now that he has a son, he is focused each day on the child-rearing model he is developing for his child and trying to provide him with quality time. Gaitán said that as a result of the master's degree, "we deconstructed that notion of seeing a child as a subject that is excluded from society and we re-learned how to see him or her as a rights-bearing social subject."

ESTUDIANTES GRADUADOS DEL PROGRAMA DE MAESTRÍA Y ESPECIALIZACIÓN SEGÚN SEXO				
	1ST COURSE	2ND COURSE	3RD COURSE	4TH COURSE
Women	19	17	11	8
Men	3		4	
Total	22	17	15	8

Produced by the author.



Students of the 3rd edition of masters

Another master's degree graduate, Walter Calderón, recalled that during the class sessions they confessed "to each other those things we weren't doing well. And that wasn't done to reprimand and reproach one another, but above all from a perspective of social commitment and change." Calderón stated that learning about children's rights led him to a profound process of reflection that changed him forever.

Meanwhile, Adriana Sáenz, a student in the fourth master's degree program course, felt that if she had not studied that academic program she would have continued replicating the child-rearing model of her parents and grandparents. Sáenz uses a child-based pedagogy in her own preschool center and said that without the training, "I would have lost out on enjoying the development and growth of so many boys and girls [there]."

And finally, Christian Rodríguez, who graduated from the fourth course, considered that child rights-related changes are built up in one way or another, in day-to-day life, and through interaction among various people and in different spaces. But prior to this they must be based on a profound individual commitment that necessarily involves "changing paradigms, convictions, attitudes and resolving to follow goals." Education and training programs like the master's degree help accelerate that process of change.

The master's degree program as a dynamic experience of the UCA

The master's degree program study plan was successfully adjusted to the new circumstances over its almost 11 years of existence. The program's last title was "Social Policies and Child and Adolescent and Rights" and it involved a total of 1,610 hours covering both taught classes and time dedicated to each student's independent work.

These curricular changes demonstrate an active process of adapting the contents and the methodology to the new circumstances that were developing. Sandra Ruiz, who was postgraduate director while the four master's degree program courses were being implemented, explained that this academic program was novel in terms of its subject matter; but it was also a learning process for the university itself, which had no experience on the topic.



masters students in playful
relationship with Children

Karla Hernández, the academic coordinator for three of the master's degree program courses, recognized that her appointment after having graduated from the first course demonstrates both the maturity of the master's degree and the learning achieved by the institution itself. Hernández pointed out that the UCA also started to incorporate other master's degree graduates as part of the program's teaching staff in the new courses. "They were professionals who were not only knowledgeable about the subject, but also had a talent for teaching and a great commitment to children's rights," Hernández explained.

Academic offer ads supported by Save the Children

Maestría
Políticas Sociales, Derechos y Protagonismo de Niños, Niños y Adolescentes (II edición)

Especialidad
Derechos de Infancia y Adolescencia (II edición)

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III. Metodología de Investigación y Construcción de Indicadores
IV. Teoría y Práctica de la Intervención en Situaciones de Niñez y Adolescencia
V. Políticas Sociales y Protagonismo de Políticas Sociales de Niñez y Adolescencia
VI. Seguimiento y Evaluación de Políticas Sociales de Niñez y Adolescencia
VII. Defensoría de los Derechos y Educación para la Paz

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Logos: RMI, Save the Children, UNICEF, UCA

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Posgrado y Formación Continua

Maestría en Políticas Sociales y Derechos de la Niñez y la Adolescencia (Edición IV)

Inicia 17 de octubre

Inscripciones 2014 hasta el 6 de septiembre

Modalidad
Sábados de 8:00 a.m. a 5:00 p.m.
Periodo de ejecución:
Septiembre 2014 - Agosto 2016

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Logos: UCA, RMI, AUSIAL, Universidad Anacleto

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Especialización en
Abordaje Interdisciplinario
con enfoque de Derecho de Niñez y Adolescencia



El enfoque de derechos de niñez y adolescencia, herramienta indispensable, por Pedro Hurtado Vega, Coordinador del Programa de Gobernabilidad en los Derechos de la Niñez, Save the Children

Fecha: 29 de abril, 2017
Hora: 8:00 a.m.
Lugar: Auditorio Amando López, S.J. - UCA

From master's degree to specialization

For Fernanda Soto, dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Communication, when the last master's degree program course finished, all of this cooperation demonstrated "favorable impacts if we think about the academic alliances forged, the education and training of professionals, the specialization of professionals."

However, the impact evaluation report on the first two courses pointed to the socio-political context as one of the factors that had most hindered putting into practice the learning related to the creation, application, follow up and evaluation of social policies that favor children.

The results of the impact evaluation of the first two courses and the individual assessments of the last two courses led the UCA and Save the Children to agree to stop offering the master's degree in order to open the way for a specialization program.

For the current dean of the Faculty of Humanities and Communication, Giovanna Robleto, the decision not to continue with a fifth course was due, among other reasons, to the need to continue offering a child-linked postgraduate program that also provided knowledge that could be applied in the participants' day-to-day work with children.

That is how the Specialization in an Interdisciplinary Approach with a Child and Adolescent Rights Focus came to be offered in 2017. The specialization brought together the accumulated experience of the four master's degree program courses and, according to dean Robleto, opened the possibility of public officials taking an interest in education and training in this field of study.

A total of 25 students participated in the specialization, with 100% successfully completing it. Eight of the students were male, meaning that male students accounted for 32% of the total, exceeding the male enrolment rate for the master's degree. A total of 12 judicial branch officials also enrolled in the specialization with the full institutional and financial backing of their work place, which was something that had not happened in the preceding programs.



Specialization Interdisciplinary Approach with focus on Children's Rights

The individual experiences of three people who completed this program and were consulted for this study revealed significant changes in their professional and personal lives.

Anielka Jirón felt that “At the professional level, the knowledge acquired has helped me produce proposals based on programming with a child-rights focus and communication campaigns. At the personal level, it has allowed me to put into practice the promotion of and respect for child rights in different socialization spaces and with my family.”

In the case of Ervin Zamoran, “The specialization provided the opportunity to implement the child-rights focus in an interdisciplinary and interinstitutional way. This strengthened my knowledge, which I would put into practice in the institution for which I work.”

Meanwhile, Nadya Rodríguez believes that university programs must continue to be promoted on this subject:

“It could be said that despite the fact that Nicaragua has one of the best juridical legal frameworks related to the issue of children, we are still a long way off in terms of social awareness. In order to effectively facilitate the exercising of children’s rights, there must first be sensitization and awareness for the recognition of children as rights-bearing subjects. There is still a long way to go for this to happen and it will only be possible with quality education and training for both professionals and the population in general.”

CHILD AND ADOLESCENT PROTECTION POLICY AND REGULATIONS

On June 1, 2016, the UCA presented its Child and Adolescent Protection Policy and Regulations. On that occasion, the university’s rector, priest José Idiáquez, commented that the policy had been drawn up with a view to guaranteeing respect for children and adolescents visiting the university campus. The initiative came from the Central American University itself and the process of producing the policy and regulations was supported by Save the Children.

According to university records, there are some 2,000 students between the ages of 16 and 17 in its undergraduate programs. There are also over 200 children studying foreign languages and a group of 250 primary school students between the ages of 8 and 13 being attended to by the UCA Pastoral Center’s “Chateles” social project.

Other activities in which the UCA comes into contact with children include the social volunteer events developed in institutions such as Pájarito Azul, Colibrí and the “La Mascota” Children’s Hospital. Renata Rodrigues, a former UCA academic vice-rector and coordinator of the team responsible for producing the Protection Policy, considers that this document was the UCA’s “ethical and moral [response] in relation to all the training, social projection and research activities conducted by the university involving the presence of children.”

The process of producing the policy

The first part of this process was the conducting of a situational diagnosis of child protection in the UCA, whose findings included child protection good practices identified by those consulted. The same study also detected certain physical risk areas.

The Child and Adolescent Protection Policy and Regulations document was based on four principles:

- The principle of the best interests of the child.
- The principle of non-discrimination.
- The principle of survival and development.
- The recognition of the children's personality.

This policy is considered to be a very innovative initiative as no other Nicaraguan university currently has a similar policy.

As Renata Rodrigues stated in her final report when the document had been completed, "The Protection Policy is a cross-cutting issue in all of the institution's existing policies, as well as the plans, programs and projects derived from them, which substantially helps to guarantee its application."



Protection Policy UCA-Friendly Version

For Karla Hernández, a member of the work team that produced the policy, it has the great merit of including regulations, something that she said does not tend to happen with other documents of this kind.

Hernández recognized that the process of implementing this UCA institutional policy is still in its initial stages. The action plan identifies monitoring and evaluation three years after the policy begins to be implemented, but the current conditions in the university as a result of the national context have made it impossible to follow the original plans. Neither has it been possible to fully develop the dissemination strategy planned for 2018.



Termination of Protection Policy

CHILD RIGHTS ALLIANCES

The UCA's participation in other civil society spaces included its integration into the Alliance Group for Investment in Children and Adolescents in 2006. This group left several lessons as a result of its eight years of existence, including the organization of a children's forum with presidential candidates held that same year as an arena in which children could present their own demands.

The UCA's presence in the Central American Learning Circle on Child Rights and Local Development has been another experience in this academic institution's social projection. Karla Hernández, who has been the UCA representative in the Learning Circle, explained that the university asked to be incorporated into that initiative as it was an important space for sharing different methodologies for working with children at both the local and regional level.



Participation in workshop with Save the Children partners

The Network of Organizations working on the Issue of Child Rights Governance is another body in which the university has a presence. This network means that there is currently a more fluid coordination process and joint dynamics among the participating organizations. As a result, Radio Chavala and the Movimiento Infantil Luis Alfonso Velázquez Flores also ended up among the study topics in the Specialization in an Interdisciplinary Approach with a Child and Adolescent Rights Focus.

As part of the Network's agreements, the UCA trained Radio Chavala on a gender approach. In conjunction with Nicaragua's Office of Human Rights Ombudsperson, the UCA also presented a report on the social audits conducted by that public institution. Another agreement in that same Network was the promotion of child rights that the Coordinating body for NGOs working with children and adolescents (CODENI) and the UCA did with private businesses.

One last experience of working in an alliance for children's rights has been the participation of the UCA's Pastoral Center in the Child Participation Roundtable promoted by Save the Children.

Student internships as a sphere of cooperation

The realization of internships for UCA students with Save the Children and projects supported by that organization has been sustained throughout this period of joint work. It is an issue that was established in the last Cooperation Framework signed by both institutions in 2015.

Argentina Martínez, Save the Children's country representative, stressed this as an element that could be expanded in the future given the good experiences it has produced. One aspect that particularly stands out is the participation of social communication students in the "Every Last Child" global campaign.

The interns worked on adapting contents for social networks, producing videos and supporting technical radio training for the group of children and adolescents from the municipality of La Dalia in the department of Matagalpa.

There have been internships in a number of different areas. According to the UCA's Labour Exchange Office (OBT), at the beginning of 2017 Save the Children's Operations and Finances included interns in the organization's administrative, financial, logistical and information technology divisions.

OTHER IMPORTANT INITIATIVES

In addition to the different academic programs, the Child and Adolescent Protection Policy and Regulations and the alliances with other civil society organizations, the UCA also implemented other initiatives aimed at helping the university promote child rights in Nicaragua with cooperation from Save the Children.

Project linked to the education area (IDEUCA)

Save the Children-Norway and the UCA's Education Institute (IDEUCA) started working together in 1997. In 2002, they launched the project "Strategic Actions for a Free and Quality Public Education for Children and Adolescents with Civil Society Participation," which lasted until 2003. Then in 2004 they implemented the project "Contribution to the national educational policy and to the development of technical pedagogical capacities in educational management and local development in support of the national plan of action for children and adolescents."

For former IDEUCA director Rafael Lucio, these experiences left behind lessons learned for all of the parties involved, along with a systematization that was subsequently published and led to a proposal for implementation in the country's rural education sector

Education and training on Communication and Health with an Emphasis on HIV/AIDS

The experience of the Communication and Child Rights program originally developed by Save the Children-Norway and the UCA encouraged the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to involve itself in the initiative. The learning generated around this joint work led to a Diploma Course on Communication and Health with an Emphasis on HIV/AIDS, four editions of which were developed between 2006 and 2011.

Through this new experience in the area of communication and health with an emphasis on HIV/AIDS, UNICEF, Save the Children and the UCA trained over a hundred journalists, communicators and professionals to help change the media's approach to the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

Professional updating on journalistic coverage of human trafficking cases

In 2010 and 2011 Save the Children and the UCA held two Professional Updating Courses on Journalistic Coverage of Human Trafficking Cases. These courses trained 50 journalists and communicators from different communication media and public institutions such as the National Police and the Supreme Electoral Council. They grew out of a regional project originally sponsored by Save the Children-Spain.

Like the other courses linked to children's rights, these yielded immediate results for those who participated. For Iris Prado, who was dean of the Faculty when these CAPs were implemented, "the humanistic education and training areas have an impact first of all on the person, and it is from that first moment that changes begin in that person's working environment."



UCA participating in exchange spaces with a partners

CONCLUSIONS

The cooperation between Save the Children and the UCA turned out to be a novel experience in the area of promoting child rights. The following points stand out as results of this cooperation effort:

- Nicaraguan society now has over 300 professionals trained as a critical group of human talent that has been exerting an influence through their work in favor of child rights, mainly in civil society organizations and the media.
- Different organizations in society have been strengthened in programmatic terms through the training of members of their personnel on issues related to child rights.
- It was not possible to obtain evidence of the role that public officials who participated in these programs have been able to play in their own institutions in terms of practices and social policies linked to child rights. Despite the efforts made, their participation was numerically lower.
- The country's communication media have displayed an increasingly generalized interest in changing their approaches in media coverage of child-linked issues.
- The production of a proposed code of ethics for news coverage on child-related issues was the first initiative of this nature. Unfortunately, it was not taken on by the journalism trade associations or the main communication media.
- The academic theses and work produced by the students of the four master's degree program courses provide important bibliographical sources on this subject, although most of these studies had a very limited social and practical influence.
- The people who graduated from these programs and were consulted for this study stated that their education and training led to transformations in their personal and professional lives. These included changes in habits and behavior, greater human sensitivity to the problems children face, the breaking of negative patterns, and a greater sense of respect for the rights of children, which translates into a greater commitment to those rights when exercising their profession.
- Those people consulted for this evaluation considered that these education and training programs generated interest and expectations in society and recommended that the UCA continue promoting this kind of academic initiative.
- The UCA now has a Child and Adolescent Protection Policy and Regulations, making it the only university in the country to have incorporated the issue of child rights into its academic life.
- The UCA created academic programs with innovative curricula that have left a teaching staff specialized on these issues, with the pedagogy including a human rights approach.
- The UCA contributed to other civil society groups through communication campaigns, methodology-sharing sessions, advocacy actions and training sessions on issues related to child rights.
- This cooperation has focused on a shared interest in child rights, so the contents were the determining factor rather than the financial amounts earmarked to the different initiatives.
- Marked by relations of respect, open learning, frank dialogue and the generation of knowledge, this cooperation experience was a win-win-win situation for Save the Children, the UCA and above all Nicaragua's children.

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This publication reflects the coordinated and sustained effort for almost 20 years between the Central American University (UCA) and Save the Children in order to promote and defend the rights of Nicaraguan children through the implementation of training programs and advocacy actions. These years of close collaboration, of mutual learning, are based on a shared vision of the world, where we place children and adolescents in the center.

With the help of Save the Children, and as a university entrusted to the Society of Jesus (Jesuits), the UCA has assumed the permanent commitment to train professionals who recognize the dignity of people and in particular that of children and adolescents, sensitive to situations of exclusion that these live, committed and conscious of contributing to a more just society.

F. José Idiáquez, S.J.
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