

PROJECT SUMMARY

The 'Paraguay Includes' Project

IMPLEMENTED BY

THE COORDINADORA POR LOS
DERECHOS DE LA INFANCIA
Y LA ADOLESCENCIA





About this brief: This paper presents the summary of a project implemented by the civil society organization (CSO) Coordinadora por los Derechos de la Infancia y la Adolescencia (CDIA) in Paraguay for three years, from 2018 to 2021, through a small grant provided by the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women (UN Trust Fund). The summary was co-created and co-authored by CDIA with the support of an independent, external consultant. It summarizes the results of, and lessons learned from the project, with the aim of contributing knowledge to the evidence base on ending violence against women and girls (VAWG), for use by other practitioners and partners. It also serves as a useful tool to inform the next stage of the project and to raise awareness for the continued investment in this CDIA and its efforts to prevent and respond to violence against refugee and migrant women and girls, and support gender equality in Paraguay.

ABOUT THE ORGANIZATION AND PROJECT

CDIA



CDIA has been working since 1993 to bring together non-governmental institutions dedicated to promoting and defending the rights of children and adolescents in Paraguay.

Its **vision** is to be a fortified institution, firm in the defense, promotion and protection of the rights of children and adolescents in the country. Its goal is to be a protagonist – that is, a generator of proposals – with the capacity to influence public policies and with a role of being alert to and monitoring the State’s actions regarding the rights of children and adolescents.

Its **mission**, as a collective of CSOs, is to coordinate actions related to the promotion, defense and surveillance of the rights of children and adolescents to contribute to their effective fulfillment, promoting the integral development of children and adolescents as social subjects of rights, with an emphasis on their active participation.

CDIA is currently made up of 29 organizations from different areas of civil society (20 members and 9 supporters). In 2008, it set up the Observatory on the Rights of Children and Adolescents and Public Policies, which is dedicated to storing and generating information through research and periodic reports on public policies, legal frameworks, budgets, data, and the rights of children and adolescents.



Project Title: Paraguay Includes



FORMS OF VIOLENCE ADDRESSED

- Violence against girls with disabilities;
- domestic violence; and
- violence against working girls; and, at community level
- sexual violence (including rape and harassment);
- violence in schools; and
- violence in public spaces



PROJECT BUDGET

UN Trust Fund's contribution:

\$150,000



CSAAC's contribution:

\$25,000



Total:

\$175,000



IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS

DECIDAMOS (an association of nine CSOs), Teletón Paraguay, Asociación Mamá Cultiva Paraguay and Fundación Denide, as part of the CDIA network; the group of activists #PorEllas; and government agencies of the National System for the Protection and Promotion of the Rights of Children and Adolescents (SIPPINNA) at national and local levels

PROJECT DESCRIPTION

This project, implemented by CDIA with the support of a small grant from the UN Trust Fund, focuses on addressing violence against girls; violence in the community, including sexual violence (non-partner violence); violence in schools and public spaces; and human trafficking.

The project involved CSOs, activist groups, key players from the government, and the active participation of children and adolescents with disabilities.

The project aimed to provide members of CSOs and community groups, and education professionals and public officials, with information, training, tools, analytical data, and technical assistance to improve inter-institutional and intersectoral coordination and increase the effectiveness of efforts to prevent violence and address its consequences.



PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD:

1 Sept 2018–31 Aug 2021

Six-month no-cost extension until

28 Feb 2022

to participate in organizational learning activities and document project lessons



Activity: Advocacy workshops with government agencies and entities.

Photo credit: CDIA

PROJECT LOCATIONS, BENEFICIARIES AND AGENTS OF CHANGE



Primary project beneficiaries/agents of change:

PLANNED	ACTUAL
90 girls with disabilities	90 children and adolescents up to 19 years of age from organized groups at national and local levels, as well as children and adolescents with disabilities

The project was implemented in the **Caaguazú** and **Central** departments, as well as in the capital, **Assunción**. As a result of the pandemic, virtual activities were able to reach all 17 departments of the country.

Secondary project beneficiaries/agents of change:

PLANNED	ACTUAL
<p>245 people:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 55 CSO members 60 teachers 20 journalists 110 members of the government 	<p>245 people:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 55 CSO members 60 teachers and professionals from rehabilitation centres 20 communicators, family members of children and adolescents with disabilities, and students 110 public servants from the municipal councils for the rights of children and adolescents, the departmental secretariats for children, the Ministry of Children and Adolescents, the National Council for Children and Adolescents, and national and local authorities, and university students

Country context

In 2021, about 34.1 percent of Paraguay's population was aged 0–17 years, equivalent to a total of 2,509,861 million people.¹ **In Paraguay, at the time of the 2012 census, 10.7 percent of people had some type of disability.**² According to estimations, 10 percent³ of children and adolescents in the country had a disability.

In Paraguay, as in most countries in the world, children and adolescents with disabilities are one of the most vulnerable population groups. This vulnerability is further exacerbated by poverty, rurality and ethnicity, exposing them to multiple and overlapping violations of their rights.

In particular, women and girls with disabilities in rural and indigenous communities in Paraguay face discrimination, or social and economic exclusion. They have little to no access to education and health services

and, consequently, are at greater risk of experiencing violence. Families facing economic difficulties often place their sons and daughters with other families, where they may end up in situations of domestic slavery.

In addition, the global coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic also resulted in vulnerable populations being left behind and excluded from national prevention and response efforts. In Paraguay, the rate of mortality caused by COVID-19 was three times higher for indigenous populations than for the rest of the population.⁴ Furthermore, in general, the disease mostly affected the lowest income groups, who had less access to education, health care and basic services. In the case of women and children, this inequality was aggravated by age- and gender-based discrimination.⁵

Theory of change

Vision of change (project goal): the aim of this project was to ensure that, by the end of the implementation period, young and adolescent boys and girls with disabilities and their families from the suburban or rural and indigenous communities of Asunción, Caaguazú and Central departments would benefit from improved safeguarding of their rights to be protected against all forms of violence.

Characteristics of the problem addressed by this project are as follows:

- Although Paraguay's Children's Code (Law No. 1680/01) has attempted to make progress in guaranteeing the rights of this population group by creating SIPPINNA, the various state agencies involved do not have sufficient technical, human, or financial resources or infrastructure to carry out adequate work to improve the quality of life of children and adolescents.
- In SIPPINNA, the teaching teams have had the least access to training and information on children's human rights issues and find themselves without the theoretical and practical tools to tackle the issue of violence against children.
- National and local institutions working on issues related to children and adolescents, disability, and violence against children and adolescents are not sufficiently coordinating with each other and lack the capacity for inter-institutional and intersectoral coordination to ensure protection for boys and girls with disabilities.
- The media need information materials, methodological planning tools, analytical data and adequate technical assistance to improve their capacity to generate informed and gender- and disability-sensitive news coverage.

To address these issues, the following intermediate changes are required.

- Members of and decision-makers in local and national coordination bodies should improve their capacities and practices in implementing public policies, with the inclusion of a human rights-based approach (HRBA) and gender and diversity perspectives, focusing on children and adolescents with disabilities in general and girls with disabilities in particular.
- Children and adolescents and their families, and technical teams of services for children and adolescents with disabilities should have an improved understanding of inclusion, the rights of people with disabilities, and the various forms of violence and the mechanisms to end them.



Activity: Advocacy workshops with government agencies and entities.

Photo credit: CDIA

PROJECT INTERVENTION HIGHLIGHTS

Strengthening state institutions and civil society organizations

Activities were carried out to provide support and technical assistance to improve inter-institutional and intersectoral coordination and communication, at national and local levels, and enhance cooperation between government institutions, civil society and users of public services.

- SIPPINNA representatives at national and local levels were provided with clearer and more relevant information and better legal advice on the application of legal frameworks and public policies through follow-up instruments.
- Sociolegal guidance was provided to CSOs to ensure the effective monitoring, application and dissemination of regulations and legislation.

- Round-table discussions were held at departmental level, in partnership with the departmental secretariats for children and adolescents of the governorates, to include the HRBA and gender and diversity perspectives in national and local plans.

The objective of the above activities was to strengthen departmental and municipal mechanisms for the effective implementation of national and local public policies that will guarantee the promotion of the rights of children and adolescents, as well as the prevention of violence against them and their protection and care. The activities place emphasis on violence, from the human rights, gender, inclusion and intercultural perspectives.

INNOVATIVE PRACTICE: CHILDREN'S AND ADOLESCENTS' ACTIVE PARTICIPATION



The project promoted processes in which children and adolescents participated on their own behalf, either personally or as part of larger groups. These included dialogues and meetings in which they expressed their opinions, put forward proposals, raised concerns, and outlined their expectations in relation to various topics.

The initiative '**Our knowledge and answers: children and adolescents sharing their knowledge in times of COVID-19**', proposed a way to learn the points of view of children and adolescents from the perspective of the ethics of narrative practices – that is, based on the consideration that people always have answers and suggestions about ways to face the situations that affect them. This initiative was based on a process of collecting stories about the situation in the context of COVID-19 and how children and adolescents were responding to that situation. It involved a total of 67 children and adolescents between 5 and 18 years of age (48 girls and 19 boys), 16 of whom had a disability, from 23 localities. As a result, young and adolescent boys and girls with and without disabilities were able to build their own networks based on their unique experiences and personal accounts. The conversations were facilitated by technical reference people for each child. They took place in different formats, including video calls, instant messaging, phone calls, etc. It is important to highlight the difference in practices involved in the creation of spaces in times of uncertainty between adults and young and adolescent boys and girls with disabilities as a learning experience for the teams working to implement the initiative. This gave the children and adolescents with disabilities the opportunity to express themselves in their own contributions, through their own words and expressions (including drawings), without adults translating their perspectives.

Training activities

Training activities were both part of a strategy and an end point in different areas. On the one hand, they served to make visible situations of violence against children and adolescents in general, and those with disabilities in particular. And, on the other hand, they facilitated the development of skills and improvement of knowledge, mainly among public servants. These activities were based on the principles of the right to non-discrimination, the best interests of the child, the right to survival and development, and the right to be heard.

Activities included the following.

- Workshops focusing on training and updating support for CODENI and other bodies of SIPPINNA, as a contribution to strengthening the capacities and knowledge of public servants responsible for upholding the rights of children and adolescents.
- Workshops on how to inform about, prevent and protect against violence, developed with professionals and students in the field of communication and related fields. The media play a key role in the generation of public opinions and sociocultural patterns, so it is important for them to have access to information, data and training to deliver more appropriate news coverage or accounts of situations.

PROJECT ADAPTATION DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC



Although the project began before the pandemic, much of it was implemented during the pandemic, while the associated restrictions were in place. Urgent adjustments had to be incorporated throughout the project due to the unpredictability of its impact. These include the following.

- The project's intervention, which was initially planned only for Asunción and the Caaguazú and Central departments, was extended nationwide due to the adjustments necessitated by COVID-19. The project, therefore, reached all 17 departments in the country.
- Workshops and follow-up meetings were held with government agencies, CSOs, international organizations, and academia to develop an action plan to respond to the social and health emergency. Participants discussed the situation of children and adolescents with disabilities and their families and communities, and the various violations of rights that were aggravated in the context of the pandemic.
- The active participation of children and adolescents, with and without disabilities, was promoted to enable them to express their opinions, share their experiences of and strategies for coping with the social and health crisis affecting their lives, and the experiences of their families and communities. This required a process in which children and adolescents were active agents for change and protagonists of their realities. CDIA supported this process so that the perspectives, experiences, and opinions expressed by children and adolescents would be considered in decision-making and the formulation of public policies on issues that concern them.
- In all the inter-institutional coordination actions carried out, and through the dissemination of information and up-to-date data on the reality experienced by children and adolescents with disabilities, CDIA highlighted the difficulties in accessing services and guaranteeing their rights, which were exacerbated in the context of the pandemic.

- The pandemic had an impact on the functioning of several public services, putting those who were already vulnerable at greater risk and making it more difficult to access, for example, medication or care. The **Inter-institutional Round Table for Dialogue on Access to Medication** was held to address the lack of medical products for people with disabilities, which can worsen children's and adolescents' health conditions. The meeting included Teletón Paraguay, the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare, CDIA, the Technical Unit of the Social Cabinet of Paraguay, the Directorate of Social Welfare and Assistance, the National Secretariat for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the Ministry of Children and Adolescents, and sought to review strategies to guarantee access to and the availability of medication.

Project results

- Four workshops aimed at assessing institutional players' knowledge/capacities on the subject of disability and on the issue of violence against children and adolescents with disabilities were held, with two target groups: educators and representatives of municipal councils for the rights of children and adolescents.
- Twenty-four training workshops on socio-pedagogical resources to address cases of violence and human rights violations against children and adolescents and people with disabilities were held for local and national stakeholders in all 17 departments of the country.
- Twelve technical assistance meetings were held at national and local levels to enable state organizations and CSOs to work on local and national plans for the protection of children's and adolescents' rights. Discussions were held with the Departmental Secretariat for Children of Caaguazú, which is also a representative of the Council of Governors, to plan technical meetings to support the departmental secretariats for children and adolescents.
- Six multistakeholder and multilevel social and political dialogues were held to discuss the inclusion of the HRBA and gender and diversity perspectives in national and local plans.
- A communication plan was prepared for the project and an annual awareness campaign plan was drawn up for social networks.



MONITORING AND EVALUATION



- **Baseline Setting:** A baseline was established at the beginning of the project and accomplished through interactions with stakeholders and a comprehensive desk review, which included examining similar past experiences, relevant laws, and current public policies.
- **Feedback Collection:** Throughout the initiative, satisfaction surveys were distributed during training workshops to service providers, leading to an overwhelmingly positive evaluation of the overall activities.
- **Document Generation:** For transparency and accountability, various documents were created during the project, including: Attendance sheets, Program schedules, Invitation letters, Training and communication plans, Audiovisual records.
- **Thematic Work Groups:** CDIA often organized thematic work groups involving key stakeholders, including children. These groups provided a rich context for analysis and informed subsequent project adjustments, proving especially valuable during the COVID-19 pandemic's unforeseen challenges.
- **Data Collection:** CDIA's data collection efforts maintained updated statistics on violence against children and adolescents, especially those with disabilities. This data informed the planning and execution of project activities.
- **Systematization Document:** CDIA created a systematization document outlining lessons learned and best practices throughout the project, as well as providing recommendations for future initiatives in this area.
- **Children and Adolescent Inclusion:** The project prioritized the involvement of children and adolescents as an innovative practice. Specific methodologies were developed to ensure their safe inclusion and participation in all processes, empowering them to suggest actions in their own words.

Even after the project's conclusion, CDIA and its member organizations continue to share the positive results of the "Paraguay Includes" initiative across multiple sectors, including academia, civil society, and the private sector.



New knowledge and products

- **Situation of Children and Adolescents with Disabilities in Paraguay: Application of Legal Frameworks and Recommendations of the United Nations:**⁶ this report identifies progress made and remaining challenges in public policy responses for children and adolescents with disabilities, based on an analysis of the current regulatory framework, existing plans, United Nations recommendations and existing official data. A comprehensive review and analysis of existing national and international legal frameworks, other specialized reports and journalistic documentation were conducted. These assess the protection of the rights of children and adolescents with disabilities, make recommendations to the State and list the challenges that should be considered.
- **Caring and Caring for Oneself: Socioemotional Experiences of Caregivers of Children with Disabilities during the COVID-19 Pandemic:**⁷ this report looked at the socioemotional well-being of caregivers of children with disabilities and compiled their reflections and accounts of their experiences, taking into account the context of the COVID-19 social and health emergency and understanding that vulnerable populations were most affected. The document seeks to make visible the voices and experiences of caregivers of children with disabilities and their responses to the COVID-19 crisis, recognizing that the well-being of people who care for and protect the lives of children with disabilities directly influences their life experiences. Gathering information from caregivers will contribute to the well-being of children with disabilities, and this information will be used to formulate recommendations on care policies.
- **Alternative Report of Organized Groups of Children and Adolescents from Paraguay: “Our Rights, Our Voices” – Universal Periodic Review (UPR):**⁸ this document was presented ahead of the review of Paraguay as a member of the United Nations Human rights council in the framework of the UPR exercise. It was compiled with the participation of children and adolescents, who took centre stage in sessions held with representatives of various States and international CSOs to tell them about the situation of their rights in the country and share recommendations on how to improve them.



LESSONS LEARNED

- Both the implementing organizations and those consulted agree that the project showed that issues related to people with disabilities are almost invisible in society and public policies; they are not a significant part of political discourse or the public agenda. A major consequence of this situation is a lack of up-to-date and/or systematized data to carry out actions.
- The baseline study confirmed that actors at national level have a limited capacity for action when implementing public policies for the promotion and protection of children's rights: the public response and provision of social services are insufficient; such services are not always available or accessible in all the territories, and budgets for their effective development are inadequate. In addition, community leaders and children and adolescents with disabilities in Asunción, Caaguazú and Central departments have little knowledge of the institutions that make up CDIA and their roles, although they are well aware of their rights and the situations of violence they experience on a daily basis. Therefore, the document generated at the end of the diagnostic workshops is in itself an input for work in the area of rights and public policies.
- Although at the beginning of the pandemic there was a general stagnation of activities, little by little and with the insistence of CDIA and its member organizations it was possible to achieve greater coordination with state institutions. In the case of CDIA, this challenge became an opportunity to work for the first time directly with all the municipalities, and with the departmental secretariats for children and adolescents and the departmental secretariats for education.
- During the project, more CSOs recognized the importance of linking their actions to the issue of disability and giving it visibility in activities with their target groups and in the communities they support.



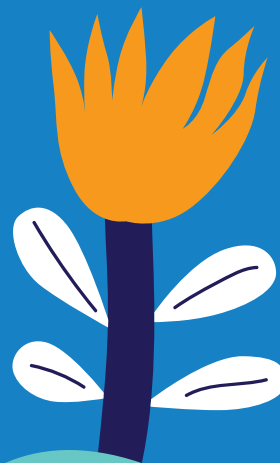
WHAT'S NEXT?

CDIA has generated spaces for dialogue among its member CSOs that work on disability issues (Teletón Paraguay, Fundación Denide and Asociación Mamá Cultiva Paraguay) to capitalize on the results and lessons learned from the project. It is necessary to continue this collective effort to position the need for the protection and inclusion of children with disabilities in the public and political agendas, at national and local levels.

The methodologies implemented in the project to stimulate dialogue and reflection, which resulted from the cooperation between children and adults, opened up new possibilities for developing and deepening the active participation of children. The project was a learning experience that enabled the improvement of awareness-raising processes and campaigns, and

public policies, and the creation of innovative lobbying activities. These constitute good practices that can be shared nationally and internationally. For organizations conducting activities addressing aspects of inclusion, gender, non-discrimination and interculturality in culture and public policies, adopting an approach involving the active participation of children and adolescents could be a better and faster way to reach the target population.

The 'Paraguay Includes' could be replicated and carried out on a larger scale, both nationally and regionally. This could be achieved through the creation of spaces for the exchange of methodologies and through the use of approaches to generate information, tools and materials that can be adapted to other contexts and cultures.



FURTHER INFORMATION

This brief was co-created by **Donatella Montaldo**, an independent external consultant, and **Alana Cano** and **Anibal Cabrera** from CDIA.

For more information about CDIA: <https://www.cdia.org.py/>

For more information about the Paraguay Includes project: <https://www.paraguayincluye.org/>

Recommended citation: Montaldo, D., Cabrera A. and Cano A. (2022), *Project Summary: Paraguay Includes – Promoted by the Coordinadora por los Derechos de la Infancia y la Adolescencia* (New York, United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women).

About the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women

The United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women, managed by UN Women on behalf of the United Nations system, is the only global grant-making mechanism dedicated to eradicating all forms of violence against women and girls. Since its establishment in 1996 by United Nations General Assembly [Resolution 50/166](#), the UN Trust Fund has awarded \$198 million to 609 initiatives in 140 countries and territories. For more information, please visit the [UN Trust Fund website](#) and [Learning Hub](#). To give feedback on this product, please contact the United Nations Trust Fund to End Violence against Women at untf-evaw@unwomen.org.

About the UN Trust Fund small grants modality

Small grants are currently provided to organizations managing annual operational budgets below \$200,000 and eligible for a UN Trust Fund grant of up to \$150,000. This modality was introduced in 2014 to build the capacity of small organizations, with a specific focus on small women's organizations. The proportion of the UN Trust Fund portfolio allocated through small grants at the time of publication was 34 per cent. Small grants include a higher proportion of flexible funding (for core costs) and a dedicated budget for self-care, which sets the modality apart from the general grant allocation. The [UN Trust Fund's Strategic Plan 2021–2025](#) makes a commitment to focusing grant selection on women's rights organizations, women- and girl-led organizations, and organizations with local and community reach. The small grants modality is a key mechanism to achieve this. Organizations receiving small grants are eligible for support in producing a final, external evaluation and/or (from 2021) support to co-create and produce a knowledge product summarizing the results and lessons of the project. The methodology for co-creation includes focus group discussions and interviews with the organizations involved, desk reviews of project documents, baseline and endline surveys and monitoring reports, and co-drafting and co-editing the brief.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Information obtained by CDIA Observa from Secretaría Técnica de Planificación del Desarrollo Económico y Social and Dirección General de Estadísticas, Encuestas y Censos, *National Population Projection 2000–2025: Review 2015*. Available at: <https://www.cdiaobserva.org.py/la-infancia-cuenta-d/>
- 2 National Statistics Institute (INE) (2021), “Información publicada en conmemoración del Día Internacional de las personas con discapacidad”. Available at: <https://www.ine.gov.py/news/news-contenido.php?cod-news=955>.
- 3 Paraguay Incluye (n.d.), “Nosotros”. Available at: [https://www.paraguayincluye.org/#:~:text=En%20Paraguay%2C%20el%2035%25%20de,\(NNA\)%20tiene%20alguna%20discapacidad](https://www.paraguayincluye.org/#:~:text=En%20Paraguay%2C%20el%2035%25%20de,(NNA)%20tiene%20alguna%20discapacidad).
- 4 Codehupy (2021), “Un año de violencia, exclusión y desalojos contra comunidades indígenas”. In *Derechos Humanos en Paraguay 2021*. M. Barrios Cáceres (Ed.) (Asunción, Paraguay, Codehupy), pp. 55–68. Available at: <https://ddhh2021.codehupy.org.py/un-ano-de-violencia-exclusion-y-desalojos-contr-comunidades-indigenas/>.
- 5 Ibid.
- 6 CDIA Observa (2019), *Situation of Children and Adolescents with Disabilities in Paraguay: Application of Legal Frameworks and Recommendations of the United Nations – Executive Summary*. Available at: <https://www.paraguayincluye.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Resumen-Situacion-de-la-NInez-y-Adolescencia-en-Paraguay.pdf>.
- 7 CDIA Observa (2021), *Caring and Caring for Oneself: Socioemotional Experiences of Caregivers of Children with Disabilities during the COVID-19 Pandemic*. Available at: <https://www.cdiaobserva.org.py/2022/08/19/cuidar-y-cuidarse-vivencias-socioemocionales-de-cuidadoras-de-ninas-ninos-y-adolescentes-con-discapacidad-ante-la-pandemia-por-covid-19/>.
- 8 CDIA Observa (2020), *Alternative Report of Organized Groups of Children and Adolescents from Paraguay: “Our Rights, Our Voices” – Universal Periodic Review*. Available at: <https://www.cdiaobserva.org.py/2021/05/04/informe-alternativo-de-grupos-organizados-de-ninas-ninos-y-adolescentes-de-paraguay-nuestros-derechos-nuestras-vozes-presentado-al-consejo-de-derechos-humanos-de-naciones-unidas/>.

