

## Ten years of action on children's rights in Latin America

Date : 7 June 2016



Carmen Serrano, leader of the BICE network for Latin America and the Caribbean, looks back over ten years of action in favour of **children's rights**.

### When you started with BICE, what was network's state in Latin America ?

**Carmen** : When I arrived in 2005, BICE and its local partners in the region were undergoing a difficult period ; difficulties with project funding and the closure of the BICE regional office in Montevideo (Uruguay). The partner associations (about a dozen) were disoriented.

Faced with this situation, I felt that the first thing to do was to restore our partners' confidence, and to bring everyone together on a common project : **the defence and promotion of children's rights and dignity**.

To accomplish this challenge, and to strengthen the impact of local actions, we had to build a common space, to promote knowledge-sharing, mutual learning and initiatives. This strengthened the importance of networking : each partner organisation sharing its own experience with the other partners.

The first activities within the Latin American network were training seminars on issues linked to

**childhood.** These seminars soon became annual events for local organisations.

## **After more than ten years, what is the current situation of the network**

**Carmen :** Today, the BICE network in Latin America has around 40 member and partner organisations, all of whom share the same aims and values, and work for integral child development based on three major programmes :

- Humanising juvenile justice;
- Combatting abuse and sexual violence
- Promoting access to education.

For these organisations, the BICE network has become a place for exchange, a forum for intellectual creativity, a platform for resources and expertise on issues relating to children's rights.

## **Why is this network so important ?**

**Carmen :** In my view, networking permits :

- A pooling of **good practices** between partners, thanks to the creation of a platform for listening and sharing.
- A strengthening of members' capacities, through seminars and regional training sessions.
- Greater effectiveness for awareness-raising and advocacy, which are regional rather than merely local.
- A forum for reflection and action on common goals.

## **What do you feel is the networks' greatest achievement ?**

**Carmen :** Given all we have achieved in the last ten years, that's a difficult question. What inspires me the most today is the momentum created on the continent, the interest and motivation of our partners and members, and the interpersonal exchanges. Members of the network have really taken on the different projects and have adopted common positions on different issues linked to childhood. This strengthens their voice on a regional and international level. Actions on the ground have had a real impact, and many good practices, local to begin with, have been disseminated throughout the continent.