



INFORME SOBRE LOS DERECHOS  
DE LA NIÑEZ EN BOLIVIA  
*Escuchen nuestra voz*

# Alternative Report on the Rights of the Child in Bolivia

“Listen to our voice”

2020



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Right to Non-discrimination

# 1. Presentation

This document collects our problems and our dreams as children and adolescents, in our full exercise of our right to have a say, to express ourselves, to say what we think, to raise our voice and to take an active role in the issues that matter to us.

The preparation of this Alternative Report entitled “Listen to our voice” is considered appropriate as this document collects, in a clear way, the voices of children and adolescents from different departments and regions of Bolivia, about the fulfillment of our rights. It also collects our reflections and proposals, emerged from a participative process.

We were able to create a cooperation among several institutions that work with us for the defense, promotion

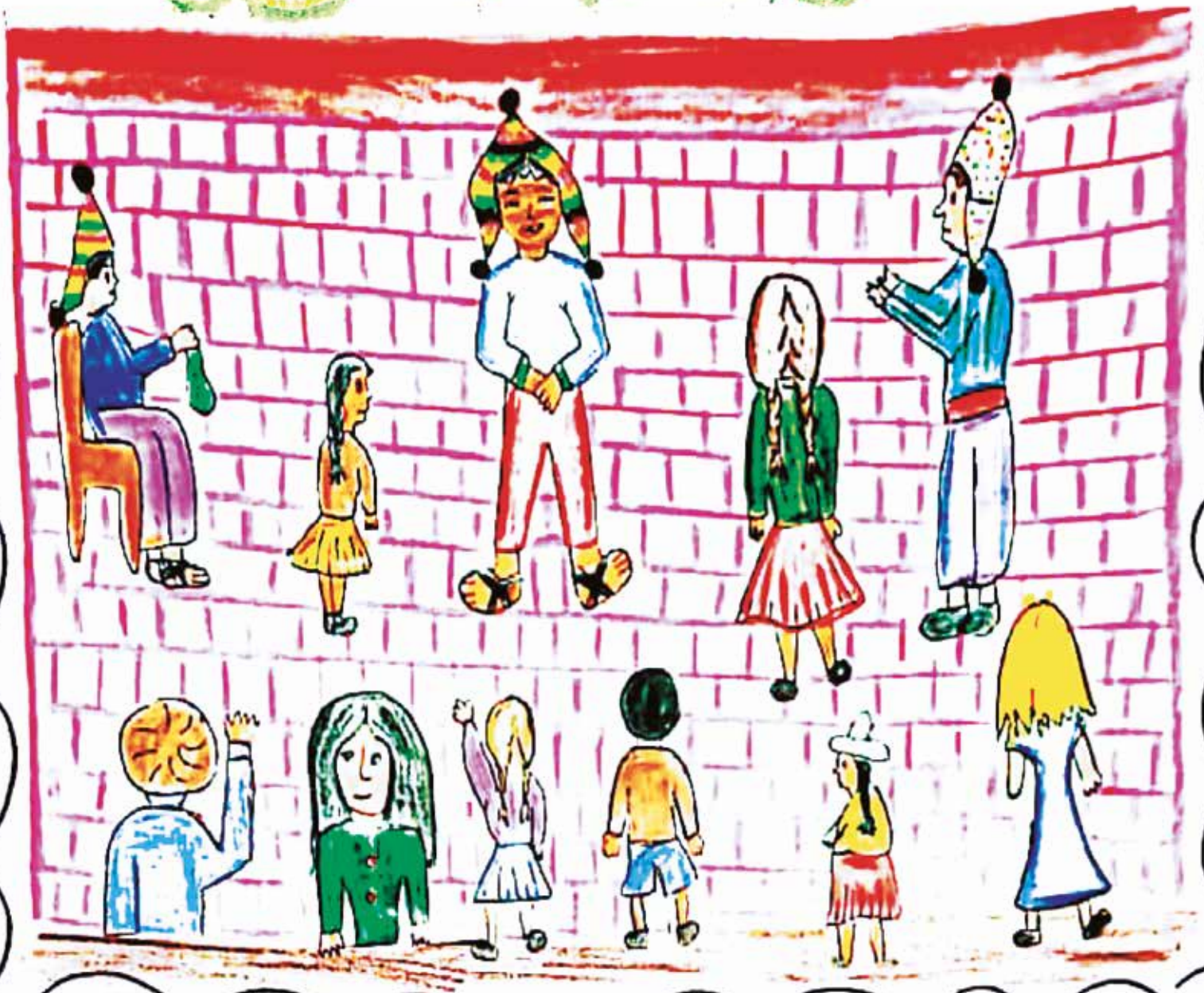
and advocacy of our rights. These institutions provided the spaces to train us and to prepare the report in all its stages; the planning, the design, the implementation and the provision of supplies for the drafting.

With this work, we hope to contribute, in a meaningful way, to the follow-up work of the Convention on the Rights of the Child’s implementation in our country. This work is carried out by the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child.

We also intend our report to be useful for our authorities to make the commitment to work on behalf of children and adolescents by listening to our opinions and making us participate in decision-making spaces, related to issues that affect us in a direct way.

*Bolivian children and adolescents who prepared the Alternative Report*

# Right to Participate



## 2. The beginning of this adventure

At the beginning of this year, Defence for Children International (DCI) along with its Bolivian National Section and the DCI Regional Desk for the Americas had the initiative to prepare an alternative report by children and adolescents. This report will be presented to the Committee on the Rights of the Child. The particular feature of this report is that we, children and adolescents in Bolivia, for the first time, prepared a report on the current situation of the exercise of our rights.

This initiative was presented in March to different institutions that work in the promotion and defense of our rights. Consequently, the “Coalition of Organizations for the support of the Alternative Report by Bolivian Children and Adolescents’ implementation for the Committee on the Rights of the Child” (OIANA Coalition, by its Spanish acronym) was created to assist us children throughout this process. The plan was to create face-to-face meetings to discuss the rights we consider a priority. Methodological guides with emphasis on rights were developed in order to encourage dialogue and reflection among children and adolescents. Between March and April, this process had to be stopped due to the quarantine, decreed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In May, in a joint effort between DCI, Act2gether and FMSI Maristas Bolivia, the coordination team of the OIANA Coalition was formed and the new proposal for the preparation of the Alternative Report, in a virtual way, was developed. Together with the three coordination institutions, the following organizations take part to the OIANA Coalition: Kindernoithilfe Bolivia,

World Vision Bolivia, Fundación Privada de Fieles Centro de Multiservicios Educativos, International BorneSolidaritet, Alalay Foundation, Brother Manolo Centre, Red Nacional de Líderes y Lideresas Juveniles Tú Decides Bolivia, Save the Children Bolivia, Inti Phajsi Foundation, Centro de Comunicación Cultural Chasqui, Red Viva Bolivia, Centro de Estudios y Apoyo al Desarrollo Local, Andean Communication and Development Center, Religious People in Bolivia with a Presence in the United Nations, Vivat International, Distrito Scout Cochabamba, Infante - Integral Promotion of Women and Children, Centro de Servicios Agropecuarios Técnicos Chuquisaca, Asociación Maya Paya Kimsa, OCAR Mosoj Kawsay, Centro Psicoterapéutico Mosoj Runitas, Fundación Justicia Social, Fundación para Promover el Desarrollo Humano Ayni, Fe y Alegría, Asociación Promotores de Salud del Área Rural, Defensoría Edmundo Rice, Hermanas Misioneras Siervas del Espíritu Santo.

Before we prepared our report, we, children and adolescents, worked together with the Coalition OIANA through four commissions:

- **Commission for protection policy.** We support the development of protocols that guarantee protection and safety for children, adolescents and all other participants in the preparation of the report.
- **Survey commission.** We participated in the development of a digital and physical survey, applicable to children and adolescents, based on the rights that are the least respected by the State, family and society.

- **Commission to the adaptation of manuals to the virtual mode.** We contributed in the preparation of four dialogue sessions (Let's talk about our rights; Understanding the Alternative Report; Contributing from my own context and my own knowledge; I express my views and I offer proposals on behalf of all children and adolescents) in order to address rights issues with the rest of the children and adolescents who are protagonists in the preparation of the report.
- **Logo and slogan commission.** We contributed to the design of the logo and the slogan. They will be used in the documents we elaborated and in future actions.

Finally, the process of preparing the Alternative Report lasted for ten months. Besides being presented to the Committee on the Rights of the Child, it will be disseminated in our country by us, children and adolescents, through different media. Likewise, we intend to follow up on the recommendations the Committee will make to the Plurinational State of Bolivia regarding our rights.

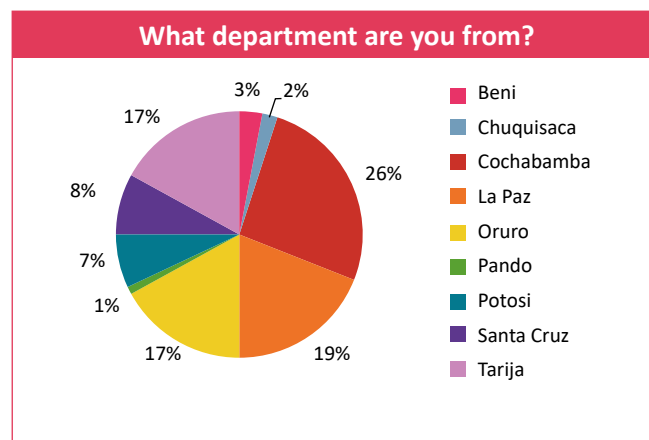
*... our adventure has just begun!*

## 2.1 The protagonists

Who participated in the workshops and surveys?

735 children and adolescents from the nine departments of Bolivia (Cochabamba, Oruro, Tarija, La Paz, Potosi, Beni, Pando and Santa Cruz) participated in the dialogue and reflection workshops about the rights of children and adolescents, encouraged by the IOANA Coalition.

1166 children and adolescents answered both digital and physical surveys. The graph shows the geographical distribution:



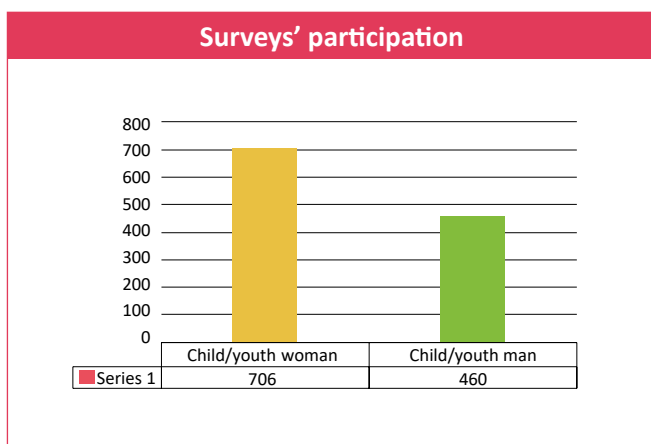
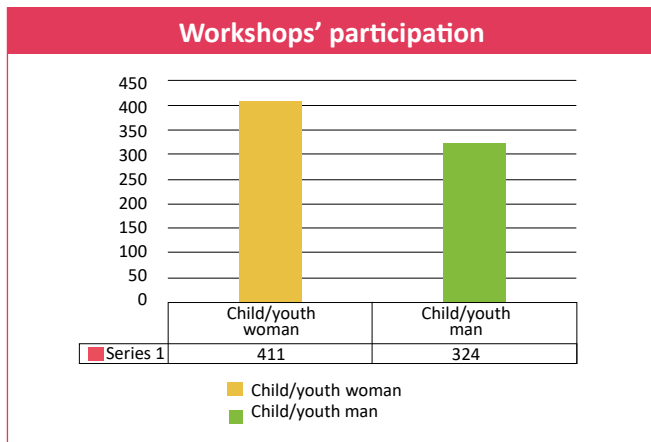
### General characteristics of the population

A wide, diverse and significant participation of children and adolescents has been achieved during the workshops and surveys; members of the municipal and departmental Committees for Children and Adolescents, Advisory Board, student governments and course representatives, students, scouts, community leaders, brigades, networks, children and adolescents who live in institutionalized homes, and those who live in high-risk situations (children in street situation, in transitional homes and others).

Children and adolescents of different ages (8 to 18 years old) participated in the workshops and the surveys. This allowed to have a great diversity of opinions.

In the workshops, the participation of the girls was slightly higher than boys (411 girls and 324 boys). In

the surveys, boys' participation is almost half that of girls, as shown in the graphs:



## 2.2 On which rights we decided to work

Before the workshops and the surveys, we, children and adolescents, met twice in order to identify those rights on which we want to inquire. The following question guided us during the sessions:

*What are the rights that we consider most urgent to talk about and that are most present in our environment?*

As a result of our reflection and analysis, we decided to prioritize the following rights:

- Right to Family
- Right to an Identity
- Right to Non-discrimination
- Right to Education
- Right to Health
- Right to Protection
- Right to a Life Free from Violence
- Right to Leisure and Play
- Right to Participation
- Right to Information
- Right to a Healthy Environment

As a result of the surveys, we consider it important to emphasize that we learn most about our rights in school and family. Results are shown in the following graph:







Right to Equality

# 3. What we know about the regulations and bodies that protect our rights

## 3.1 Convention on the Rights of the Child

After our dialogue workshops and reflection on our rights, we can say that the Convention is:

*“The Convention on the Rights is an international treaty that guarantees rights of children worldwide”. (Children and adolescents in La Paz)*

*“A Convention signed by different countries, with the aim of prioritizing the rights of children and adolescents”. (Children and adolescents in Oruro)*

*“A United Nations treaty” (Children and adolescents in La Paz)*

*“An instrument that gives us the opportunity to comment and talk about the concerns we have about our rights”. (Children and adolescents in Cochabamba)*

## 3.2 Committee on the Rights of the Child

After our dialogue workshops and reflection on our rights, this is what we can say about the Committee on the Rights of the Child:

*“It is a meeting or congress where the rights of children and adolescents are addressed and established”. (Children and adolescents in Santa Cruz)*

*“The Committee considers our opinions, and that’s very good because almost always we are told not to express our own opinions. We should receive this information since we are very young”. (Children and adolescents in Cochabamba)*

*“I did not know about this Committee, but now, at least I know what they’re talking about. I want to participate in the report because I want the Committee to know the truth”. (Children and adolescents in Cochabamba)*

## 3.3 Child and Adolescent Code – Law 548

After our dialogue workshops and reflection on our rights, we can say that the Convention is:

*“The Law that protects children and adolescents in Bolivia”. (Children and adolescents in Chuquisaca)*

*“It is the Law that guarantees the protection of the rights of the child; it also demands society to protect us without violating our rights”. (Children and adolescents in Tarija)*

*“We did not know much about this Code. It should be addressed in schools so that children and adolescents learn about this Law that defends our rights”. (Children and adolescents in La Paz)*

*“It is our magna carta to understand our rights”. (Children and adolescents in Cochabamba)*

*“This law is not only for adults to interpret, but also children and adolescents should be able to understand it”. (Children and adolescents in Chuquisaca)*



Right to a  
Life Free  
from Violence

STOP

Right to  
Live

## 4. Let's talk about our rights

### 4.1 Right to Family

#### Why this is important to us

- Family protects us, makes us feel safe and gives us love.
- Growing up in a family is important for our happiness and development.
- Family can always teach us something, like respect and confidence.

#### How we are living our right

Although for us the Right to Family is very important, not all children and adolescents have the opportunity to grow up in one. We identified that:

Sometimes, parents leave us in the care of other relatives or acquaintances due to economic issues. They leave the country and look for a job abroad due to not having enough money. In this situation, we feel more vulnerable and our rights are at greater risk.

*"Because of the lack of money, parents abandon their children, they go far away and don't come back". (Children and adolescents in Cochabamba)*

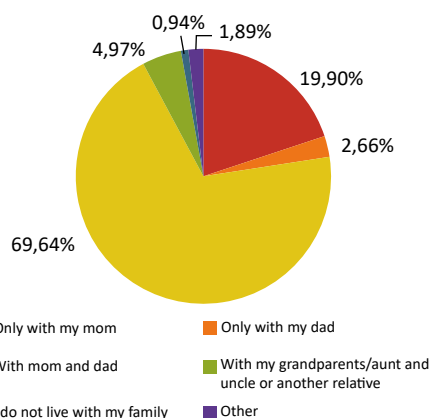
*"It is not nice living in other houses that are not yours; a child needs his/her parents". (Children and adolescents in Cochabamba)*

Sometimes, parents use violence against their children, and home becomes unsafe for us. They can abuse us, hit us, yell at us and neglect us. Some parents are alcoholic and sexist. During quarantine for COVID-19, we heard that more and more children and adolescents are

being abused within their families. Many little girls and adolescent girls are raped by their own fathers or other relatives, and they become pregnant. When children and adolescent suffer violence within their homes, they might escape and live on the streets or go to a shelter.

#### More children and adolescents express their opinion on this right

##### Who do you currently live with?



According to the survey's results, 69% of children and adolescents live with their parents.

*"There is a lot of violence in families". (Children and adolescents in Tarija)*

*"I miss living with my older brothers but not with my parents because they drink alcohol". (Children and adolescents in La Paz)*

*"Not all families have understanding and love of parents for their children". (Children and adolescents in Tarija)*

*"Aggressors are, sometimes, within the family itself". (Children and adolescents in Cochabamba)*

Likewise, when our parents separate, sometimes they forget about us and abandon us. Consequently, we end up growing up in a dysfunctional family, which does not pay attention to us nor gives us affection.

*“It is a very complex issue. Sometimes, when the parents separate, they do not consider the imbalances they can generate in their children”.*

(Children and adolescents in Santa Cruz)

*“I would like to be with my mom. It is sad not being looked for. Those women who do not love their children should never be moms”.* (Children and adolescents in La Paz)

*“I get very sad when my mom says she will come to visit me but she doesn’t. I feel she does not care about me”.* (Children and adolescent in Cochabamba)

### The consequences of violating this right

The fact that we do not have a family can put us in a situation of greater vulnerability: abuse, violence, becoming orphans.

For a child or adolescent, living without a family is very sad because nobody loves you, therefore, he or she cannot recognize what love is. They might even end up looking for love and acceptance in other places, like gangs or friends who are bad influence. They might let off steam by drinking or using drugs.

### What we propose to improve the exercise of this right

*Government and Municipalities should create:*

- Sources of decent employment for families, for them not to leave their children.
- Free rehabilitation centers for parents with problems of alcoholism.

- Care centers that provide psychological support to parents, children and adolescents, and that teach parents how to raise their children without using violence.
- New professional teams for the Offices of the Ombudspersons for Children and Adolescents in the different municipalities of the country.
- Programs and services that teach children and adolescents how to report their families in case they suffer mistreatment, abuse or neglect.
- Training programs in each zone or neighborhood, for social actors, such as the neighborhood committee, in order to prevent and monitor violence in families.
- Laws that benefit children and adolescents living in shelters, to allow them to reintegrate into their families and to facilitate adoptions.
- The conditions for the families to guarantee our rights, assuming with responsibility their role of fathers, mothers or caregivers.

## 4.2 Right to an Identity

### Why this is important to us

- It assures us a name and a surname.
- It accredits us as citizens of a particular nation.
- We can have a live birth certification, a birth certificate and an identity card.

### How we are living our right

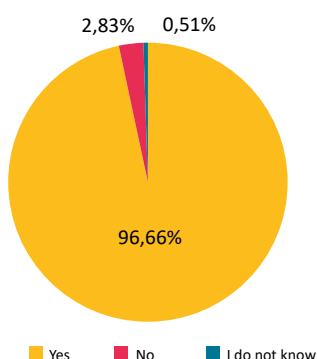
Identity is something very important and necessary because it distinguishes us from other people, and it allows us to acquire other fundamental rights. This right is related to the Right to Life, to Family, to have a nationality among others.

*“We all have the right to have a name and to belong to a country”. (Children and adolescents in La Paz)*

Most children and adolescents who live in the cities have the birth certificate and the identity card, but children and adolescents living in rural areas are often unable to access a birth certificate or an identity card. This happens because their communities do not have a Civil Registry Office or a General Service of Personal Identification.

#### More children and adolescents express their opinion on this right

##### Do you have an identity card?



According to the survey's results, 97% of children and adolescents have an identity card.

*“Progress is being made, but there are still children and adolescents who don't have a birth certificate or an identity card”. (Children and adolescents in La Paz)*

*“There are circumstances in which children are unable to exercise this right because they live in remote rural areas, where identity services do not reach”. (Children and adolescents in Tarija)*

*“A person without a record is as if he or she did not exist”. (Children and adolescents in La Paz)*

The whole civil society should be informed about it in order to understand that identity goes beyond a nationality or a birth certificate. In Bolivia, there is a cultural diversity, with cultures such as Quechuas, Aymaras, Guaranis among others.

*“We, children and adolescents, have the Right to an Identity since our birth”. (Children and adolescents in Tarija)*

*“Having an identity makes us citizens”. (Children and adolescents in Tarija)*

#### The consequences of violating this right

Without an identity card and/or a birth certificate, we are unable to access studies, medical attention and the free services of the State. This hinders our personal growing.

If our Right to an Identity is not respected, we might lose our cultural identity: language, typical dress, customs, values.

#### What we propose to improve the exercise of this right

- The State must establish offices in rural areas so that they can process birth certificates and identity cards free of charge.
- Mobile hospitals are needed to reach the most remote places in order to provide live birth certification to all infants who require it.
- Access to these documents without the presence of an adult.
- Municipalities must create cultural spaces in the communities, neighborhoods and schools to value our culture as our typical richness and beauty, source of pride.

## 4.3 Right to Non-discrimination

### Why this is important to us

- We are all equal regardless of our origin, race, skin color, religion, studies and others.
- It assures us to have the same rights for adults, and other specific ones.
- Nobody can discriminate us for being children and adolescents.
- It teaches us to value the diversity of people and their cultures.

### How we are living our right

We, children and adolescents, consider that currently this is a very violated right. Although there are laws that protect us from all acts of discrimination in our country, the problem still persists, especially against us.

*“It is a very strong social problem in Bolivia. It has not improved”. (Children and adolescents in La Paz)*

*“The Right to Non-discrimination is not much respected because we all discriminate other for having a different skin color. People are also discriminated against due to their social condition”. (Children and adolescents in Pando)*

*“Children and adolescents deserve to live in an environment free of discrimination”. (Children and adolescents in Chuquisaca)*

In our school and neighborhood there is a lot of discrimination among children and adolescents. This is visible by the assignment of offensive nicknames due to skin color, economic situation, the clothes you wear, disabilities, etc. There are also children who bother others due to their physical appearance. These situations of discrimination make us feel sad. We feel discriminated against for living in peripheral

neighborhoods and for not having access to water, electricity and sewage services.

*“I have been discriminated against in school for being Afro-Bolivian”. (Children and adolescents in La Paz)*

*“When you are discriminated against, you feel bad”. (Children and adolescents in La Paz)*

*“Some children and adolescents in school insult or mistreat other children who are new in school or come from the countryside”. (Children and adolescents in Cochabamba)*

We observe that, in many circumstances, the lack of money in our families becomes a reason for discrimination, because doctors, lawyers, psychologists, teachers do not want to meet our needs.

*“Apparently, only people who have money are well treated in hospitals”. (Children and adolescents in La Paz)*

*“We are all equal before the laws; nobody has the right to believe that he or she is superior to others. I cannot consider myself superior to the one who has less only because I have more economical possibilities. It does not work like that. We are all equal, but nobody respects that law. Low-income people are always discriminated against”. (Children and adolescents in Pando)*

Discrimination has a variety of causes, but most of all, it is because of a lack of empathy. We have to love and respect each other.

*“People help very little when they have a lot”. (Children and adolescents in La Paz)*

*“In our local area, there is a lot of discrimination against for being pregnant while in school, for being poor, for being short, for having a dark skin”. (Children and adolescents in Oruro)*

### The consequences of violating this right

One of the consequences that we identified is school violence or bullying.

Children and adolescents often live afraid of being rejected by their classmates or friends which may cause depression, lower our self-esteem, isolate us from others, and even deny our origin in order to not being discriminated against.

### What we propose to improve the exercise of this right

- The State and all public and private institutions must socialize Law 045 Against Racism and All Forms of Discrimination.
- Departments and municipalities must implement policies against discrimination for children and adolescents.
- Municipalities must offer training courses for all public servants about the harm caused by discriminatory acts.
- Public and private institutions must promote a culture of peace and a harmonious coexistence through training campaigns in media and social networks.

## 4.4 Right to Education

### Why this is important to us

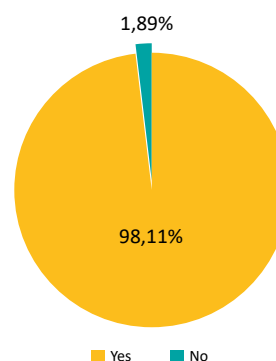
- The Right to Education is important because it allows us to acquire essential knowledge.
- Education allows us to receive training, to be professionals and to overcome poverty.
- Through education, we learn essential values, such as respect for our teachers and for our classmates, and equality.
- Through education, we become more responsible persons.

### How we are living our right

There are many barriers to access to education; therefore, not all children and adolescents have that opportunity. For example, there are children and adolescents who are unable to attend school because their parents consider it more important for them to work and support the family financially. In other cases, although parents are willing to send them to school, it is far away from their homes. Therefore, they have to walk long distances, exposed to several risks, and they may end up not attending school anymore. This happens especially in rural areas, where there are just a few schools, far away from one another, unlike the city.

#### More children and adolescents express their opinion on this right

#### Before the pandemic, did you attend school?



According to the survey's results, 98,11% of children and adolescents attended school before the pandemic.

*"Some of us can study, but others just work, because they do not have the resources to attend the school". (Children and adolescents in Cochabamba)*

*"Growing up without education is a big problem because when we grow up, we are unable to access to a stable job and to good living conditions". (Children and adolescents in La Paz)*



Due to the pandemic, we could not continue with face-to-face classes; the teachers are giving us virtual classes. However, we are still unprepared for the current situation, mainly because not everybody has Internet access. For this reason, they cannot participate in classes. Besides that, we cannot understand the teachers clearly since they are not prepared either to teach using this technology.

*“I think that the teachers are not able to provide us the necessary education through technology. We do not understand them and they do not understand us either”. (Children and adolescents in Potosi)*

*“Only a few of us have classes now; others cannot attend due to economic reasons”. (Children and adolescents in Oruro)*

*“Teachers do not understand that we all learn at different rates and in different ways. It is even worse now with virtual classes”. (Children and adolescents in La Paz)*

*“This year, I feel like I have not learned anything in my virtual classes”. (Children and adolescents in Tarija)*

### The consequences of violating this right

Not having access to education limits our right to a life with dignity, to have goals and to develop interest in studying.

The lack of money in families often causes children and adolescents to drop out of school to work. Consequently, they are exposed to many risks, like exploitation, and their future life is compromised.

Virtual classes are causing lower performance in the academic area.

### What we propose to improve the exercise of this right

- Considering the current context, teachers must be trained in the new forms of teaching through technological tools.
- We demand that more resources be allocated to education, also investing in facilities and creating innovative educational spaces.
- Teachers must make our families aware of the importance of education.
- The government must support families so that they do not require their children to generate economic resources.
- Children and adolescents should receive more guidance on the opportunities they have at the end of their studies.

## 4.5 Right to Health

### Why this is important to us

- Only if we are healthy can we study, play, participate in different activities and enjoy life.
- Health implies many important things, such as having a correct diet that favors our development, and receiving medical attention when we get sick.

### What we think about our right

While health care should be free for all children and adolescents, when we attend a health center or hospital, we are charged. Therefore, we cannot claim that the Right to Health is accessible to all, because only families who have the resources to pay for health care and medicines can reach it. Likewise, we consider that medical centers are not well equipped and do not have all the specialties.

*“It seems that doctors are interested in charging for the service they perform, rather than helping us heal”. (Children and adolescents in Oruro)*

We are not always treated well and with respect, and when we ask for information we may receive partial or incorrect answers.

*“When we are admitted to a hospital, we are not treated with respect, we are not cared for well. We are given medication without further explanation of our health condition”. (Children and adolescents in Cochabamba)*

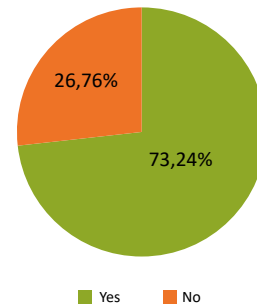
*“In hospitals you are not well treated, especially if you are a teenage mom”. (Children and adolescents in Cochabamba)*

During the pandemic, medical care for us, children and adolescents, is limited, because the hospitals are full of Covid-19 patients, and there is the possibility that we might get infected. If we need specialized care, often we cannot access it or it is very expensive.

Children and adolescents from peripheral areas and rural communities are even more affected compared to those who live in the city. There are not enough health centers; medical attention is not permanent (sometimes they are present in the communities once a month) and there are no pediatricians. We also recognize that there is a strong relationship between health and poverty because when children and adolescents do not eat well, their physical and mental development is affected.

### **More children and adolescents express their opinion on this right**

**When you are sick, do you go to a health center, a hospital or a health post?**



According to the survey's results, 73,24% of children and adolescents indicate that they go to a health center when they feel bad about an ailment.

*“It requires facilities and specialized health personnel, such as pediatricians. There is not much attention for children”. (Children and adolescents in Santa Cruz)*

*“Children in the countryside do not receive specialized medical care because services do not reach there”. (Children and adolescents in Tarija)*

### **The consequences of violating this Right**

The poor care we receive often stops us from attending a hospital or clinic. That means that not receiving adequate treatment can prevent us from getting better.

The fact that they are not caring for children and adolescents who are not infected by Covid-19 is causing serious health problems and even death due to other reasons.

If our Right to Health is not fulfilled, our lives and development are at risk.

### What we propose to improve the exercise of this right

- We suggest sending a letter to the Government demanding that medical care be free for all children and adolescents.
- The Government should invest more in the construction and equipping of hospitals and health centers, especially in rural and peripheral areas where free care and specialized doctors in the different areas related to childhood and adolescence is urgent.
- Doctors must be trained to understand our needs and care for us appropriately.
- Programs that teach us and our families how to eat well, how to wash food before eating it need to be developed.
- Information programs on contraceptives, sexual rights and reproductive rights are needed.

## 4.6 Right to Protection

### Why this is important to us

- Children and adolescents deserve to live in a safe and secure context, wherever we are: home, school, community, or other.
- We feel neglected, and many children are living with their aggressor.

### What we think about our right

Our protection is in danger because there is a lot of violence against us. There is a sexist environment that promotes violence within our homes and affects our protection.

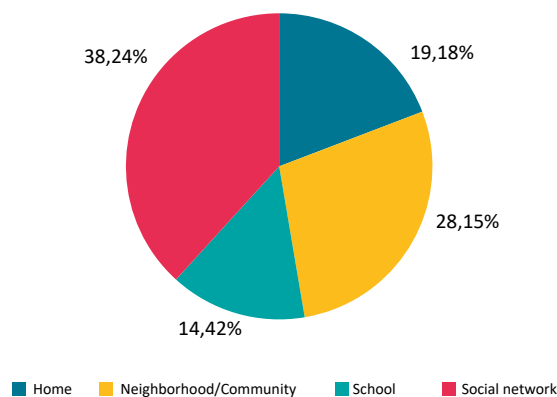
*"In our own homes there is no protection for children, and it is worse now due to the pandemic. It is a violation of our rights not to say that we are being beaten". (Children and adolescents in Cochabamba)*

Lately, cases of trafficking and smuggling, and exploitation in child labor have increased. Protection is in the hands of the family and the authorities, however many times the authorities do not protect us and abandon us. Violence in general against us has grown, and it worries us because many times we do not feel protected by anyone.

*"I have seen that in recent years there has been trafficking and smuggling. It is very sad because in most cases children cannot be recovered. People who commit this crime are not convicted as they should be". (Children and adolescents in Santa Cruz)*

### More children and adolescents express their opinion on this right

#### Where do you feel unsafe?



According to the survey's results, 38.24% of children and adolescents feel unsafe, especially when using social networks.

We live in a context of insecurity and lack of protection. There is a lot of gender-based violence in our families. New forms of violence have also emerged, especially on the Internet and in schools because there are no protective measures. Just like the others, we need to be supported and protected, because we cannot always defend ourselves when we are alone: we need help and support to be well.

*“We, children and adolescents, do not feel safe even in our own homes”. (Children and adolescents in La Paz)*

*“There is no security on the streets due to robberies, the presence of gangs... That makes the areas where we live unsafe and the police are not present”. (Children and adolescents in Cochabamba)*

#### The consequences of violating this right

If we live in situations of violence, it could cause depression, insecurity, distrust, lack of communication and low self-esteem.

If the number of children and adolescents who are abandoned and live on the streets grows, the cases of trafficking and smuggling may increase.

Many times, the service of the protection entities does not reach rural areas of the municipality. Our rights are not given the attention they deserve. Every day, we feel more unprotected. Also, every day, we feel afraid to do a report because many times our words are ignored.

#### What we propose to improve the exercise of this right

- Workshops aimed to parents and teachers on how to protect children and adolescents.
- Offices of the Ombudsperson for Children and Adolescents must fulfill their role of defending our rights, provided with an adequate budget and

specialized professionals that are not subject to constant change.

- Improve surveillance in our communities.
- Safety and violence prevention campaigns.
- Laws for the protection of children and adolescents.
- Create protective environments in our communities with the participation of the guarantors of our rights (families and institutions) so that nothing bad happens to us.

## 4.7 Right to a Life Free from Violence

### Why this is important to us

- This right is very much related to protection. Violence is a current reality that affects children and adolescents a lot.
- Only if we live a life free from violence can we develop well, physically and emotionally.
- Violence can hinder our ability to socialize and learn.
- The number of mistreatments and exploitation is increasing, and it worries us.

### What we think about our right

During the health crisis, there has been a sharp increase in cases of violence against children and adolescents within their families. Many of them are also afraid to report violence against them.

*“During the quarantine, our Rights to a Life Free from Violence and to Protection have been violated. We suffer physical and psychological violence in our homes”. (Children and adolescents in Chuquisaca)*

*“Some aggressors live in the same homes with children and adolescents, and this is not being taken into account by the authorities”. (Children and adolescents in Cochabamba)*

*“You hear in the news how children suffer violence within their families, and it is worse in these days”. (Children and adolescents in Oruro)*

*“We are experiencing physical, psychological and emotional violence by our own parents due to stress and frustration. Sometimes because of the pressure, parents vent to their children”. (Children and adolescents in Oruro)*

Violence generates violence: it is a vicious circle.

*“Many times, people are violent because they also were abused; the Right to a Life Free from Violence is very important”. (Children and adolescents in La Paz)*

*“People do not give violence the importance it really has”. (Children and adolescents in La Paz)*

*“In some cases, violence makes the victim to become the aggressor”. (Children and adolescents in Cochabamba)*

There is little communication in the family. Many times, our parents do not listen to us, and that is why we prefer not to tell them what is happening to us.

*“We live in fear due to the lack of parental support and communication in the family. The fear of what people will say plays a big part in these cases and, in the end, children and adolescents do not report violence”. (Children and adolescents in Cochabamba)*

We are exposed to dangers in the daily journey from our home to school and beyond.

### **The consequences of violating this right**

Violence against children can lead to infanticide.

Besides suffering psychological, physical and emotional traumas, growing up in a violent environment can make us more aggressive and rebellious, and also convinced that everything can be solved with fights. We are also filled with feelings of resentment and hatred. This creates a chain of violence from generation to generation.

On the other hand, violence can also generate low self-esteem and a permanent insecurity in the victim. Therefore, children and adolescents may prefer not to express themselves and isolate from everybody. In some cases, children and adolescents who suffer violence may even commit suicide.

### **What we propose to improve the exercise of this right**

- Improve the attention in the Offices of the Ombudsperson for Children and Adolescents to guarantee their safety and to improve their coexistence.
- Report or expose violence.
- Create a program for children on television or other social networks, which allows us to make anonymous reports, encourages us and shows us how else a report can be made.
- Eradicate corporal punishment from our culture as part of family upbringing. Modify the daily attitudes that push us to be violent and discriminatory.
- Support parents and caregivers to improve communication with children and adolescents.
- Get homes for children who have suffered violence so they can grow up in loving environments. Discuss with authorities and raise awareness of the importance of warm and respectful family environments.

## 4.8 Right to Leisure and Play

### Why this is important to us

- Playing is important because it allows us to develop our skills and to learn new things with imagination and creativity.
- Through playing, we can grow up healthy, and can interact with nature and with other people, especially with other children and adolescents.
- Working children and adolescents see this right violated because their time is divided into study and work, or sometimes even just work.
- Currently, because of the Covid-19 we cannot do recreational activities, and that hinders our learning.

### What we think about our right

The Right to Leisure and Play is always important for children and adolescents because it allows us to learn many things. However, we think that this right is not fully respected. We want to point out that in many areas there are no parks or courts where we can play, and if they do exist, sometimes we are required to pay a fee in order to enter. Also, sometimes the spaces we might use to play turn out to be quite dangerous. We also believe that some authorities build parks and courts for the purpose of political campaigning, and after building them they neglect them.

*“There is a lack of courts where access is free. We should not pay to play”. (Children and adolescents in La Paz)*

*“It is difficult finding places in good conditions or safe for us to play”. (Children and adolescents in La Paz)*

*“There are many abandoned and neglected parks, dangerous for us, because they are*

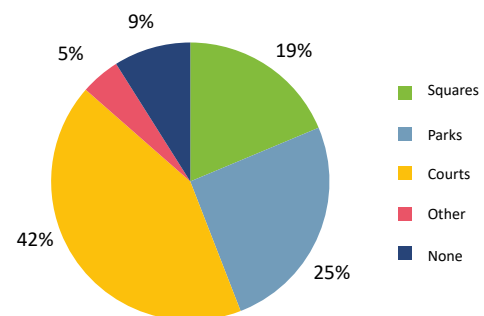
*meeting places for alcoholics and drug users”. (Children and adolescents in La Paz)*

*“We cannot play freely. We are afraid to go alone to the parks”. (Children and adolescents in La Paz)*

*“In my neighborhood, courts are far away, therefore we play in the streets under the risk of being run over”. (Children and adolescents in Cochabamba)*

### More children and adolescents express their opinion on this right

#### Do you have playgrounds near your home?



*According to the survey's results, 42% say that, near their homes, there are sports courts where they can play.*

We are concerned because, although in theory all children and adolescents are equal and have the same rights, there are children and adolescents who, due to poverty and need for money, cannot exercise them. There are many children who have to work and do not have the time to play and have fun.

*“The street becomes the playground of many children and adolescents since they are forced to stay there for many hours, selling sweets and cleaning the windows of the cars”. (Children and adolescents in Santa Cruz)*

*“The authorities must, at least, establish the necessary conditions to guarantee decent work and ensure moments of recreation for all working children and adolescents”. (Children and adolescents in La Paz)*

### The consequences of violating this right

If there are not the necessary conditions to ensure safe moments of recreation, we could suffer serious consequences. The dangers that we may face when playing in a park or on a court cause us to be afraid.

A society with children and adolescents who cannot enjoy their Right to Leisure and Play will result in a society that is bitter, insensitive, uncreative and unwilling to socialize.

### What we propose to improve the exercise of this right

- Maintain the courts and parks, and strengthen the security of these spaces so that we can play without worries.
- Create free sports, artistic and cultural programs in all neighborhoods.
- Promote spaces and recreation days in the communities to share with our families.
- Create campaigns to clean and care for squares, parks and courts so that we can play in healthy spaces and without being at risk.
- Ensure moments of recreation for all working children and adolescents.
- Stop using this right as a basis for political campaigns.

## 4.9 Right to Participation

### Why this is important to us

- There are already participation spaces for children and adolescents, such as the Children and Adolescents Committees. Their efforts still need to be supported more so that there will be more. They are not yet given the level of importance they deserve.
- From our point of view, in the family and the school we still cannot exercise our full participation, and it is important that this change.
- In the schools, we, children and adolescents, cannot decide what is best for us, only teachers do it because they think that children and adolescents cannot make decisions. We need to talk about this.
- Despite having representative leaders, we must continue to promote participation in different spaces: communities, municipalities and departments so that our voice is heard, and we can carry out actions for the benefit of our communities.

### What we think about this right

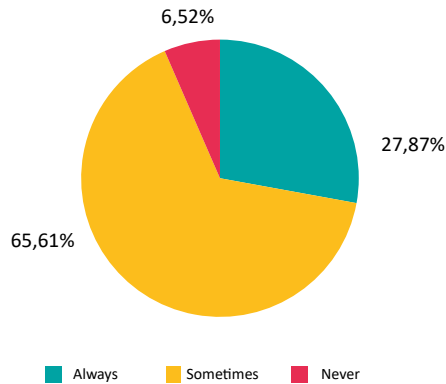
New spaces for participation are being opened, such as this report, where we can give our opinion and even propose new methods to solve problems that affect us.

*“I think we are a clear example that these spaces to participate do exist, and there are more and more. Little by little there will be more”. (Children and adolescents in Cochabamba)*

However, there are various spaces where adults do not let us intervene regarding very important issues. These are spaces where they talk about our rights, but we are not involved because they think we do not know about these things.

**More children and adolescents express their opinion on this right**

**Do you think that adults allow you to express freely your ideas?**



According to the survey's results, 65.61% of children and adolescents consider that adults allow them to express freely their ideas.

*"The spaces for participation are still few, and participation has been neglected. What is needed is listening in order to promote our right to be heard, regardless of whether we are children or adolescents".* (Children and adolescents in Chuquisaca)

*"In the committees, in theory we participate, but we are not yet taken into account as real authorities".* (Children and adolescents in La Paz)

We all have the right to participate, to be heard, to have our voices heard, to have our opinions and proposals heard, and how we express them.

*"Adults may listen to us. We do not have to be afraid. We are going to make it and the consequences will be very positive for all".* (Children and adolescents in Cochabamba)

Adults are the center of attention, and the authorities do not help in this regard to encourage our participation. We all have the right to speak and to say what we think,

not because we are minors should we be denied the right to freedom of expression.

Our parents provide us with a strict education, based on the respect to the elderly, in which children and adolescents should not express our opinion if we are not asked for it. It is important that families teach us to participate and make us aware that our voice counts too.

*"This right is fundamental and we must do everything possible to ensure that it is fulfilled".* (Children and adolescents in Cochabamba)

*"My parents do not listen to my opinion because they say I might be wrong and I am too young to decide things".* (Children and adolescents in Cochabamba)

*"In my family, they always tell me that when I am grown up, I will understand and express my opinion. Hahaha, as if I were a donkey now".* (Children and adolescents in Cochabamba)

**The consequences of violating this right**

The fact that we are not heard or allowed to participate might cause children and adolescents to be shy and introverted; we also might think that our actions and thoughts do not count, and so act as adults.

Not participating in decision-making spaces on issues that interest us means that we will have a limited generation of leaders for the defense of rights. Our ideas are kept to ourselves since we are not able to externalize them.

If we do not think that we can participate, we might start to have few or no interest in participating with our opinions. Many times, adults speak for us, and they say what suits them. It is important to learn to participate since we are young so that, once adults, we continue to participate in society.



### What we propose to improve the exercise of this right

- Strengthen the capacities of leaders and organizations and promote the implementation of public policies in favor of our participation.
- Create programs in our schools to show the importance of our participation in different topics, where they give us the freedom to know and express our opinions regarding our rights and responsibilities.
- Encourage further the participation of children. Make agreements so that our participation is seen or considered by all authorities.
- Train parents to give their opinion, to encourage dialogue between generations and to promote leadership of children and adolescents.

## 4.10 Right to Information

### Why this is important to us

- Different institutions and platforms provide us with information, but not all the time it is specific to the rights and responsibilities of children and adolescents.
- Sometimes children and adolescents are not told the whole truth. We are forbidden to have information.
- Not all the information available now is useful for our age.
- There is little information on what the rights of the children and adolescents are.

### What we think about our right

The Right to Information is very related to the Right to Education. We know that, with technological development, there is a higher level of access to information and, thanks to that, we can learn new things. However, not everyone knows how to handle it very well.

*“The most important thing is that we can learn through information. And we can use the Internet access to learn and obtain new abilities, for example, graphic design”.*  
(Children and adolescents in Santa Cruz)

Many children and adolescents have access to information; however, the problem is that, sometimes, the information is not true, and this causes a lot of confusion. There may also be limits to the information that adults give us, and they may not realize that we also have the right to know.

*“We have access to information, but the information we look for or that is given to us is not right. It means, we receive wrong information. Sometimes, they do not want us to know many things, and we also have the right to know”.*  
(Children and adolescents in La Paz)

*“Sometimes, children and adolescents are not told the whole truth. They are forbidden to have information”.* (Children and adolescents in Cochabamba)

Despite the fact that there is now greater access to Internet, many children and adolescents in the country cannot access to it due to their economic situation. In some places, despite Internet access, the quality of this service is not good, because the signal does not reach to all provinces, especially those that are far away from the city.

Many communities do not have spaces where appropriate and permanent information can be accessed, either because of lack of electricity, family finances, or because newspapers or libraries are disappearing.

*“There are children and adolescents who have difficulties to access information, either in written or virtual form”.* (Children and adolescents in Tarija)

All children and adolescents should know which rights and obligations they have in society, but there is very little information about it for children and adolescents. It is not a topic that is widely discussed nor is it a subject that is taught in schools on a priority basis.

*“At school, they do not talk much about our rights”. (Children and adolescents in La Paz)*

*“If we are not informed about our rights, we cannot participate nor protect ourselves”. (Children and adolescents in La Paz)*

We, children and adolescents, deserve to have access to information and appropriate use of social networks without affecting our emotional development and physical integrity. We must learn to search for information, and not use the first thing that appears in a search engine.

*“Not all information you find is useful”. (Children and adolescents in Tarija)*

*“Adolescents are exposed to risks if they do not use correctly the social networks or mobile devices with Internet connection”. (Children and adolescents in Chuquisaca)*

Parents and teachers do not teach us how to search for information and how to set limits. There is a lot of information now. We do not receive an orientation for the proper and responsible use of the mass media. Some media broadcast “junk programs” exposing children and adolescents to obscene images.

*“Most of the information is made for adults”. (Children and adolescents in La Paz)*

*“Biased information. Sexualized programs”. (Children and adolescents in La Paz)*

*“There is no law regulating television broadcasting”. (Children and adolescents in La Paz)*

Television is the means through which we receive information, and it is the one we like the most and the one we are most interested in, but generally the programs that are shown are for entertainment and we do not usually find educational topics.

### The consequences of violating this right

One consequence of not fulfilling the Right to Information is misinformation. Children and adolescents have no knowledge of what is happening in their community, their neighborhood or their department. They are unaware of the reality that people live in other places, or the situations that other people go through.

Sometimes it happens that, due to knowing little about our rights, children and adolescents do not know when their rights are being violated.

### What we propose to improve the exercise of this right

- Make access to information easier for children and adolescents. This may happen through programs subsidized by the Government.
- Digital pages, applications, radio and television programs should be created where correct, up-to-date and appropriate information is shared, so that we can inform ourselves about our rights.
- The laws and Code 548 must be presented by virtual means for us to continue learning.
- There should be more information in schools and other institutions regarding rights and obligations of children and adolescents.
- Authorities must work in a more efficient way, especially in rural communities, to provide greater access to information.
- Provide technological means to schools, to Territorial Grassroots Organizations (OTBs by its Spanish acronym) and other spaces.

- Train parents on which information their children can receive and how they might use it, and that it is useful information.
- Create children and adolescents' networks that train and promote the exercise of our rights, so that we can share information about our rights on social networks, radio and television.
- New technologies should not be only to play, but also to teach us how to search for useful information.

## 4.11 Right to a Healthy Environment

### Why this is important to us

- It is important to take care of the environment because it means taking care of the air we breathe every day, the food we are going to eat, etc.
- We recognize that some people do not respect flowers, animals and nature. If we take care of the environment, we can improve this situation.
- In some zones, there are no trash cans; therefore, people dump garbage everywhere or burn it.
- All children and adolescents deserve to live in a healthy environment, without pollution.
- There is pollution in the spaces where we walk and study. There are huge amounts of garbage surrounding us, and that can affect our health.

### How we are living our right

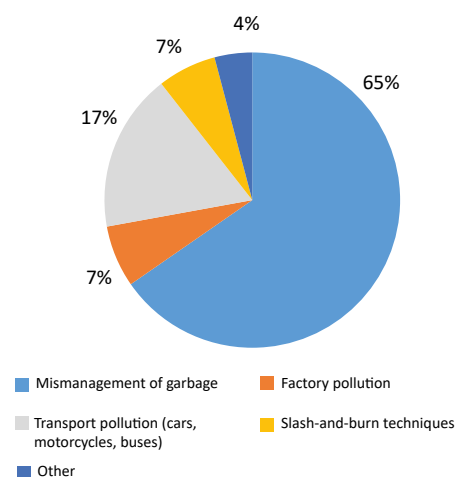
We are concerned about the environment issue, but we also see that some people are now more aware of it than before, and try to take care of the spaces and nature around them.

*"Of course, the environment is important; therefore, some actions are being taken to take care of it. For example, in my school, we*

*recycle and separate the garbage". (Children and adolescents in La Paz)*

### More children and adolescents express their opinion on this right

#### What causes the most damage to the environment in your community?



*According to the survey's results, 69.35% of children and adolescents consider that what causes the most damage to the environment is the mismanagement of garbage.*

We think that most part of population do not take much care of the green areas and the environment. We see that there is a lot of slashing and burning of trees. Besides this, they dump a lot of garbage, waste the water and do not take care nor respect animals.

*"We see a lot of garbage in the streets. There is a lot of slashing of trees and many fires". (Children and adolescents in Santa Cruz)*

*"There is a lack of trees and flowers in schools, there is a lack of trash cans in the streets. People do not have the habit of taking care of the environment". (Children and adolescents in Cochabamba)*

*“In our community, there is a slaughterhouse that causes quite a bad smell and is also harmful to health”. (Children and adolescents in Cochabamba)*

We see that there is much pollution, both visual and auditive. Nature is very much affected by factories and companies as all their waste is dumped into rivers and forests.

*“Sugarcane workers burn their plantation during three months, and nobody says anything about it. During the harvest time, we only breathe smoke and sugarcane charcoal”. (Children and adolescents in Santa Cruz)*

We know that children and adolescents need to breathe pure air in order to grow up well. We see that, in many places, different actions are already being taken to counteract the damage to the environment.

*“We used to dump a lot of garbage, and used to contaminate a lot too, but during the pandemic, we might say that this has stopped a bit”. (Children and adolescents in Beni)*

There is mainly neglect of the authorities in the cleaning. There is a lack of serious education programs to teach us about recycling or how to keep a space clean. There is little information about the handling of organic and inorganic substances.

### **The consequences of violating this right**

The burning of forests can affect the environment. Having garbage in the street or dead animals makes the ozone layer break up more and more and this creates

different diseases. In addition, the State does not show much capacity to respond to these environmental emergencies.

The planet is suffering from global warming, which will affect us in the future. Fires, air pollution, soil pollution by plastic, river pollution, loss of flora and fauna are of great concern to us.

There are diseases that are spread by flies and pollution of rivers. If there is an inadequate handling of the garbage or there is no recycling, there will be more uninhabitable spaces because of the pollution, and we will have a contaminated future.

### **What we propose to improve the exercise of this right**

- Schools must carry out campaigns to plant trees and flowers.
- Carry out workshops for the care of the environment, but also create habits to take care of the streets and respect for animals.
- Municipalities must put awareness signs and garbage cans in the streets so that people no longer throw their garbage anywhere.
- We need municipal policies for the care of the environment with the participation of children and adolescents.
- There should be awareness and training processes on organic food production while caring for the environment.
- Learn at home to recycle things so as not to pollute, and this should be mandatory. Parents also must realize that dirtying is wrong.

## 5. My ideal country

Our dream for all children and adolescents in Bolivia:

*We want* our rights not just to remain on paper, but we want to be truly recognized as subjects of rights and active citizens.

*We want* to grow up in a family capable of giving us love, protection, understanding and respect.

*We want* our cultural identity to be respected and valued in the different spaces where we grow up.

*We want* to be treated equally, regardless of our age, skin color, religion, origin, language, gender.

*We want* to have a quality education, competent teachers, adequate facilities, internet access, technological means.

*We want* our health to be a priority; we want to be properly fed and be allowed to access medical consultations, regardless of the economic resources of our families or where we live.

*We want* to live a life without violence, under the protection of our families, society and the State.

*We want* everyone to understand that play and recreation are important in our growth, so that we can develop new skills, learn by playing and sharing with our friends.

*We want* to receive relevant information about our rights and all matters of interest to us in order to participate in decision-making bodies and generate changes for the benefit of all children and adolescents.

*We want* to live in harmony with nature (Mother Earth) and take care of our environment, so that it always provides us with water, food, and fresh air, so vital to our development.

## 6. Organizations that supported us in the preparation of the alternative report

Children and adolescents who took an active part in the preparation of the report want to thank the institutions that helped us, motivated us and walked with us, so that we can tell the world what we think about our rights.

Thank you very much,

Coalition of Organizations for the support of the Alternative Report by Bolivian Children and Adolescents' implementation for the Committee on the Rights of the Child

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